KNOWING FROM WORDS

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KNOWING FROM WORDS

Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony

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PREFACE

"... so we have heard from those who went before us...." [*iti śuśruma pūrveṣām*....] – Kena Upanishad

Although knowledge and language have both been at the centre of the twentieth century's philosophical preoccupation, neither epistemologists nor philosophers of language, on an average, have taken more than a side-long look at the pervasive use of language in transmitting, sharing and preserving knowledge. Knowing *of* words and their meanings has been analysed, but knowing *from* words has been largely neglected. The primary purpose of this collection of essays – all written specifically for this volume – was to remedy this neglect.

Philosophers of different countries, traditions, specialisations and persuations have, here, come up with different accounts of the undeniable phenomenon that sentences spoken or written not only make us know their or their employer's *meanings* but also generate otherwise unavailable knowledge of historical, geographical, scientific and psychological *facts*. Every civilised literate person enjoys, through language, the epistemic bequest of his or her intellectual forerunners. Even the weapons of rational scepticism against tradition are often handed down by the tradition itself. Progress of science depends upon and results in increasing reliance on knowledge already gathered by ohers even when one is not competent enough to check the sources without further trust on publicly accepted criteria. Any epistemology which still sticks to perception, personal memory and reasoning as the *only* sources of knowledge is just being blind to the facts of common cognitive practice.

Both in the West and the East, reasonableness of trusting the words of a truthful, guileless and competent communicator has been discussed in great detail by theologians in the context of assessing reports of miracles and religious experiences. In Indian philosophy, Vedic sentences were alleged to be infallible and morally binding because they were believed, by classical Mimāṃsā to be uncaused and speakerless. Since

mistakes creep in a message only through the speaker's error, lying or incompetence, Vedic messages were supposed to be immune to mistakes insofar as they had no speaker. Other pro-Vedic as well as anti-Vedic philosophers contested this Mimāṃsā doctrine of authorless texts, creating a fertile ground of intricate philosophical arguments about word as a source of knowledge. But in this book we have deliberately avoided bringing in these theological and tradition-vindicating arguments because they would have reinforced the prevalent prejudice that Indian philosophies in general, and the topic of testimony in particular are of primarily religious importance. Thus, this anthology is *not* concerned with the issue: Whether Biblical or Vedic sentences count as good epistemic evidence.

Even the perfectly secular concerns of ancient and mediaeval Indian philosophers of knowledge and language often fit rather snugly into the grid of problems set up by contemporary analytic philosophy. The meaning of proper names is one such area of convergence of interest, and the relationship between understanding and knowledge by testimony *should* be another.

Yet students, researchers and instructors of philosophy with some exposure to and zeal for comparison between Indian and Western philosophical arguments cannot fail to notice a certain ring of self-insulating superciliousness about both the traditions. Armed with their knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, hermeneutics and logic, the tradition-rooted scholars of Indian philosophy – whether in Varanasi or in Vienna – often shun Western philosophical comparisons for fear of distorting the "text"; and, of course, Anglo-American analytic philosophers squirm at the idea of tainting the heritage of Aristotle-Frege-Wittgenstein with any non-Western views, arguments or insights – however relevant, refreshing and rigorous the latter might be.

The fond hope of the editors of this volume is that this implicit mutual ostracism will abate to some extent with publications of its kind.

After all the essays of this book were received and some of them revised, one of the editors passed away, having worked for its publication day and night through his terminal illness. The surviving editor wishes to thank the contributors for their immense patience in the face of the delay partly due to this tragic event. The active help of Professor J. N. Mohanty, Professor Ernest Sosa and Ms. Annie Kuipers for expediting its publication is gratefully acknowledged. The thought that Professor Bimal Matilal would have been so happy to see the fruit of

his editorial toil come out in the prestigious Synthese Library series gives me a tragic feeling of fulfillment!

Ancient Vedic culture counted "debt to the chain of enlightened teachers" as one of the three debts which it was one's basic moral obligation to pay back. By promoting this collective endeavour at understanding that very process of knowledge-extraction from the words of the informed communicator through which we incur this enormous debt, I hope, a fraction of it is paid back.

ARINDAM CHAKRABARTI



INTRODUCTION

"Do you *know* that the earth existed then?" – "Of course I know that. I have it from someone who certainly knows all about it."

"And it isn't, for example, just *my* experience, but other people's that I get knowledge from. Now one might say that it is experience again that leads us to give credence to others. But what experience makes me believe that the anatomy and physiology books don't contain what is false?"

"What kind of grounds have I for trusting text-books of experimental physics? I have no grounds for not trusting them . . ."

– Wittgenstein (*On Certainty*, 187, 275,600)

"Do not believe in traditions merely because they have been handed down for many generations and in many places; do not believe in anything because it is rumoured and spoken of by many; do not believe because the written statement of some old sage is produced. . . . After observation and analysis when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all then accept and live up to it . . ."

– The Buddha (*Kalamasutta, Anguttara Nikaya*)

1. AUTONOMY: A REVISIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY

The ideal seeker of knowledge in Western philosophy, at least since Locke, is a lonely figure. He does his job single-handed, finding out facts about his environment by direct observation, deducing, generalizing, and explaining on the basis of principles of inference which he has himself enunciated using his own 'natural lights'. However handy and plausible a bit of personally unchecked information might be, he would never take anyone else's word for it. Language does contribute to his knowledge-gathering enterprise, but only by facilitating the filing system, as a medium of preserving and processing, rather than *procuring*, data.

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 1–21.

Of course, none of us who *learnt* our first (and second and third . . .) languages by trusting our natural or appointed tutors and know most of our Science, History, and Geography from books, actually resemble this strictly self-reliant epistemic agent. But then, as an heir to *Sextus Empiricus*, much of modern epistemology wears its utopian character on its sleeve. One interpretation of the Socratic disavowal of knowledge could be that when he applied the strict criterion of *knowledge*hood to his own cognitive repertoire he found that nothing came up to those standards. Neither among the specialized scientists of our times who work in teams and depend more and more heavily on previously gathered results nor among educated common folk do we actually find such obstinate refusal to share epistemic responsibility with fellow-cognizers. Any *descriptive* epistemology must therefore give an account of the most pervasive phenomenon of passing on knowledge through spoken and written words. In pooh-poohing testimony as something we cannot help depending upon because of our gullibility on the one hand and our epistemic laziness on the other, in ignoring the role of accumulated (and more or less unquestioned) *tradition* in the progress of scientific knowledge, in being reluctant to grant that when deference to the authority of the expert is in order it is *irrational* to try to observe and reason for oneself – mainstream Western epistemology has been arrogantly revisionary.

Given such cultivated irreverence toward one's *own* cultural patrimony of knowledge, it is not surprising that this "individualistic tradition" (an oxymoron?) should be unwilling to learn from an alien (= non-Western) tradition, especially when that tradition is by definition *un*-modern! But just as knowledge is not a private property of any one individual or country, *doubt* too was not a monopoly of the West. Skeptics and heretics flourished in India long before the time of Buddha. Nearly risking a pragmatic self-refutation, the Enlightened Buddha preached in his last sermon:

> Do not trust my words, rely only upon your own light.

Thus, emphasis on complete cognitive autonomy and rejection of authority have played their part in the complex history of Indian philosophy of knowledge. It is because some schools challenged the knowledge-yielding capacity of the utterances of a true-believer that others got motivated to defend it with an elaborate account of trustful

intake of information from language. Thanks to its perennial preoccupation with the word, (humanly uttered or supernaturally revealed) word-generated knowledge has been taken more seriously in the Indian dialectical tradition than ever in its occidental counterpart. The attitude of the individualistic theorist of knowledge towards alleged knowledge from the words of the reliable could be either that of rejection (that it is not knowledge at all) or that of reduction (that its knowledgehood is contingent upon its possible reformulation in the form of an *inference*). The reductionist approach is naturally commoner than total rejection of testimony as a source of knowledge. That I know *something* over and above the fact that someone is making noises of a recognizable kind when I hear you utter a sentence of a familiar tongue can hardly be denied. But, like some Buddhist writers (e.g., Mokṣākaragupta, of the tenth century A.D.) and Locke, the individualist could outright *deny* that A's knowledgeable utterance to the effect that *p* can ever generate in B knowledge that *p* is really the case.

There is no relation at all between words and external objects. . . . Merely the speaker's intention is conveyed by the words (because trustworthiness is impossible to ascertain)" – says the Buddhist. (See *Tarkabhāṣā*, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1942, pp. 4–5.)

And Locke matches up his extreme epistemic individualism by the notorious thesis:

Words in their primary or immediate signification stand for nothing but the *Ideas* in the Mind of Him that uses them. (*Essay*, Book III, Ch. 2, 2)

Although he thus *eliminates* the possibility of a knowledgeable reporter's statement that p making the hearer know that *p* (rather than know merely that the speaker thinks and wishes to say that *p*), Locke does admit that sometimes words are taken as signs not of the speaker's ideas alone but as standing for the reality of external things. Perhaps fearing that this little concession to descriptive epistemology will make room for knowledge "at second hand" – he hastens to add that when instead of the speaker's own ideas words are made to stand for public objects, that leads to 'Obscurity and Confusion' and that such use of words for *things* is really 'perverting'. For these Buddhists, as for Locke, meanings are in the mind of the speaker. In India, as well as in the West, this theory of privacy of meanings has been subjected to vigorous attacks.

According to the Anti-Buddhist Nyāya philosophers of India, words

must stand for external objects and their objective properties because that is what we use them to talk about (unless someone is explicitly describing one's own mental states). Even when one is using an obviously empty descriptive phrase (such as "The Rabbit's Horn"), Nyāya resists the subjectivistic analysis that the phrase stands for some idea or image in the mind of the story-teller, because the hearer can have no access to the meant entity if it is a private mental content. That does not mean that we need to have Meinongian objective nonentities for our empty but intelligible words to refer to. The Nyāya epistemologists of language anticipate a Russellian strategy of analyzing away every empty term until each of its simple constituents is given a real extensional referent.

In the context of Western philosophy, one has to wait till Frege and Wittgenstein to find a healthy antidote to this "code-conception of language" (as Dummett calls it). If sentences stood primarily for an array of ideas in the speaker's mind, then, Frege duly warns us, your Pythagorean theorem would be different from my Pythagorean theorem (*The Thought*, p. 28) and language would be just an ineffective substitute for telepathy and, of course, one person could never *inform* another person about what happened anywhere in the world except perhaps in the speaker's mind. It is Locke's theory of meaning which is "perverted" (rather than the commonsense belief that words stand for external objects and sentences sometimes report facts) because, upon that theory, all our conversation about politics, travel or sports should be construed like our confessions to the psychotherapist.

If knowledge of anything beyond one's own immediately perceived present sensory circumstances is recognized as possible, it is very hard just to *deny* that our knowledge of the remote past and of facts available only through specialized scientific techniques comes to us through understood words of authorities, many of whom we do not have the competence to evaluate for reliability. But this admission by itself does not amount to a recognition of language as an *independent* source or knowledge about the world. Knowledge by testimony may not be *eliminated*, yet it could be *reduced* to some other variety of knowledge. Our method of extracting knowledge that *p* from a knowledgeable speaker's statement that *p* can be very plausibly shown to be a kind of *reasoning* and *inferring*. This is what the reductionist does. In the history of Classical Indian philosophy, Vaisesika-philosophers – by the beginning of the 11th century A.D. – had formulated several alternative ways of deriving or retrieving the information contained in

a sentence through a process of inductively supported inference. The papers by Mohanty and Chakrabarti in this volume rehearse some of those inferential reconstructions of word-generated knowledge.

This general line was also taken by Hume in his classic treatment of testimony in the tenth chapter of his *Enquiry*. Coady and Brittan among our contributors pay close critical attention to Hume's reductive strategy. Our rational trust on others' words is supposed (by the reductionist) to be an outcome of a conscious process of balancing between the empirical *likelihood* of the reported content and the assessed *unlikelihood* of the reporter's being misinformed or untruthful. And, of course, the assessment of these likelihood and unlikelihood must be conducted by the hearer on the basis of his own personally gathered inductive evidence. It is interesting to note that, in an essay called "On Measuring Truth and Error by Our Own Capacity," the famous French *skeptic* Montaigne recommends a strategy which is almost the opposite of Hume's:

> How many improbable things there are vouched for by trustworthy people, about which we should at least preserve an open mind. . . . For to condemn them as impossible is rashly and presumptuously to pretend to a knowledge of the bounds of possibility. (*Essays*, Book 1, Ch. 27)

In respecting others' versions only insofar as one has personally verified their credentials on each particular occasion of testifying, the reductionist is, in effect, regarding herself as the sole competent authority.

2. THE PERILS OF AUTONOMY

Whether the individualistic pressure against regarding language as an independently and directly knowledge-yielding mechanism operates eliminatively or reductively – the following serious charges can be brought against any such utopian picture of the trustless self-sufficient knower.

First, such an autonomous knower cannot use the benefits of advancing science unless she has a theory according to which knowledge can be built on the foundation of non-knowledge. Hardwig (1985) gives a compelling example of a scientific article published in the journal of the American Physical Society which was written jointly by 99 authors. No *one* university or laboratory – let alone an individual – could have conducted all the measurements of 300,000 interesting events which were required to establish the results. Many of the co-authors of the article

would never know how a given figure or a premise required was arrived at. Some details of the presumed trustworthiness of the test reports would be too technical for the scientists using the reports to construct an explicit argument for. Thus the individualist epistemologists' account will never be true to the actual practice of scientific discoveries, and much less so about the nonspecialist's second-hand *knowledge* of those discoveries. As Quinton shows with some subtlety, even the instruments of criticism with which we keep reviewing the tradition are mostly provided by the evolving tradition itself. To insist in the face of such overwhelming evidence of epistemic dependence that no doctor can *know* that a patient has such-and-such cell-counts in her blood unless the doctor has an inductive *argument* for the reliableness of the pathologist and his instruments, etc., etc. – is to commit most specialists' knowledge to lucky guesses. Of course, there can be mistakes at any stage. Any knowledge which is sharable is corruptible too. Most knowledge-claims – if not all – are defeasible. But to treat testimony as an irreducible and direct avenue of scientific knowledge is not to deny that utterances could be false, jovial, or true by fluke.

Secondly, if this autonomous knower sticks to her principle of 'know-it-yourself', she cannot make use of any *public* language even to preserve or classify information for her own future reference, let alone for others. Since the only possible languages are public languages, she cannot use language at all. The following is a rough sketch of an argument, developed in detail by C.A.J. Coady, for the indispensability of testimony for language-learning (see Coady 1992, Ch. 9).

To pick up the basic lesson – which word means what – one needs to *accept* an on-going practice and take native speakers as habitual true-believers. After the basic vocabulary and syntactic rules have been internalized by imitation and implicit inferential processes, much of the more complex devices of a language are learnt from merely the instructor's or parents' or native speakers' say-so. However, it is not merely for the *acquisition*, but also for the continuing *use* of language, that participation in the reciprocal roles of giving and receiving testimony is crucial. As Michael Dummett points out in his essay in this volume, a child who has merely learnt to blurt out a description of what he has seen, without knowing how to react (trustfully) when someone else has uttered such a description, has only mastered one half of language-use.

Using language entails exploiting other's committed statement of facts *they* have witnessed as extensions of one's own perceptual capacities

as well as letting others exploit one's own utterances in a similar fashion. The king, goes an ancient Indian adage, *sees* everything in his kingdom through the reports of efficient spies.

There is a perfectly legitimate use of the verb 'to hear' (noticed by Moore in his *Commonplace Book*, p. 362) upon which "I heard that *p*, but it is not the case that *p*" – would be awkward.

What does one lose, one might ask, if the autonomous knower never learns or uses a language? According to many philosophers, to be deprived of speech is to be deprived of thought. It is not only a contingent evolutionary fact that human beings make constant use of language during their waking life (and in much of their dream life!) but, as the Indian philosopher of Grammar Bhartrhari insisted, our so-called primitive perceptual awareness is also ineluctable etched with words. I *look* at a blossoming bush and know it to be a Rhododendron because I know that is what it is *called*. To lack a language (of some sort) is to lack an articulated shared view of the world.

Finally, insofar as our detailed knowledge of other minds is almost exclusively dependent upon verbal avowals – any epistemology which urges us never to treat a belief as knowledge unless there is a compelling argument or direct perceptual evidence to support it – will have to commit much of the doxastic basis of our social life to irrationality. There is no social life without talking (or writing or sign-language).

And there is no talking without telling. To tell, in the standard case, is to make someone know. A grammatical feature of the verb 'to tell' is this: "My wife *told* me what she wants from the store but I don't *know* what she wants from the store" is nonsense – unless one is reporting drastic loss of memory. 'Telling' – as Zeno Vendler notices – is a factive verb, especially when it takes a "Wh"-clause as its object. We are well-advised to be extremely cautious and circumspect in distilling knowledge about the external world (which it was theoretically possible for me to procure first-hand) from others' words, but as far as gathering essential knowledge about the current belief intention or feeling of my neighbor, lover, boss or colleague is concerned, we just have no other choice but to *presume* rather than *seek reasons for* first-person authority. We *have* to take their tellings as tellings of (mental) facts, except when they clash with one another. Tempered with the coherence criterion (which also can be relaxed when, for example, we have to take a dithering or akratic person's self-description on its face-value rather than systematically ignoring one side of his inconsistent introspective

reports) – evidence of testimony is our only guide to the psychology of each other. The possibility that error might have crept in because the avowal was deceptive or self-deceptive or my hearing or interpreting was faulty does not stop me from believing and believing with adequate entitlement in most cases where I have no concrete reasons to distrust. A vindicator of social knowledge (like Lehrer, Coady, Michael Welbourne or the Nyāya school of Indian thought) can thus argue that, in denying epistemic prestige to directly testimony-transmitted true beliefs, the individualistic knower is liable to lose science, language and society.

3. THE PERILS OF TRUST

But there are dangers on the other side too! We cannot afford to forget that, however truth-oriented the institution of *telling* might be, lies and unintended falsehoods are told fairly often, not to speak of fictional tales and jokes. And some tellings hit the truth by fluke. In arguing implicitly for a kind of *presumptive right* to take every understood utterance as knowledge-generated and hence knowledge-imparting, aren't we being as naive as Swift's Houyhnhnms? Austin (*Philosophical Papers*, p. 82) has reminded us that telling the truth and believing others is "the, or one main, point of talking," but even he would not go all the way with the Houyhnhnms who argued –

> that the use of speech was to make us understand one another, and to receive information of facts; now if any-one said the thing which was not, these ends were defeated; *because I cannot properly be said to understand him*; and I am so far from receiving information that he leaves me worse than in ignorance. (*Gulliver's Travels*, Part IV, IV; my emphasis)

As Elizabeth Fricker convincingly argues, the strong Presumptive Right Thesis could not be accepted. The ancient Nyāya philosophers built into the very definition of informative utterance that it has to be generated by a sincere and communicative authority. But subsequent philosophers saw the problem that establishment of trustworthiness on even a single occasion was either a regressive or a circular process. There is an apparent tendency in post-Gangeśa New Nyāya almost to run together comprehension and acceptance. (J. N. Mohanty in his paper reacts against this tendency.) A simple truster (who must be just as hard to find in real life as the radically trustless interpreter) fails to appreciate the fundamental fact that an assertion is, by the very nature

of the act, *not* necessarily true. Even if comprehension or grasp of meaning (i.e., understanding) has intimate connections with and is often psychologically indistinguishable from believing in the understood content we must, it seems, conceptually distinguish between knowledge *of* what has been said and knowledge *that* what has been said is the case.

Historically, it is correct that many modern interpreters and defenders of what Julie Jack (in her paper in this volume) aptly christens "The Uniqueness School" of Indian Epistemology, especially while writing in English, failed to distinguish between understanding and knowledge derived from the words of a truth-teller. There is no scope of controversy regarding the fact that it is the latter rather than the former which is meant by the Sanskrit word "Śābda-bodha." Thus, while giving an otherwise competent account of the controversy between the reductionists and the uniqueness-school, Gopika Mohan Bhattacharya (1977) systematically translates the Sanskrit word "Śābdabodha" as "understanding the meaning of a sentence." This is by no means a *minor* confusion! Nor is it merely a terminological quandary. Insofar as "failure to understand" (apratibha) the opponent's contentions or argument was listed as a "case of defeat" in the standard rules of disputation, there must have been a clear notion of understanding which did not require the accurate understander to agree with the speaker, or else every intelligent refutation (including the winning ones) would count as a defeat due to non-comprehension. Some refutations, especially in the late-Wittgensteinian tradition, take the form of claiming that the target-view "does not make any sense." But in standard cases one *has* to be able to make sense of a position in order to prove it to be false or even clearly inconsistent.

The confusion is generated by the fact that the cognition (true or false) which is supposed to be generated in the hearer when hearing the sentence "The fish is on the dish" – when all goes well – is simply the awareness that *the fish is on the dish* rather than the awareness that that utterance of the sentence meant that the fish is on the dish or that the speaker believes (and wants me to believe) that the fish is on the dish.

Only the former sort of unguarded and committed awareness would be called word-generated awareness ("Śābda" = from words, "Bodha" = awareness), because that is what the *words say* or the speaker says with those words. There *is* room for beliefless or noncommittal grasp of meaning in Nyāya (see Badrinath Shukla's suggested alternative accounts

of beliefless understanding) but such grasp of meaning is called "mock-awareness" or "make-believe granting" which is due to desire to take as true what is known to be patently false. Such mock-awareness never deserves the title of "Śābdabodha." It is not even a false Śābdabodha, because an uncommitted awareness cannot even be properly assessed as "*false*." When I 'get' the joke about what Hitler told King Herod in hell – I cannot be said to have a false awareness due to words because I am not *aware* that any such dialogue ever happened. I am not even in doubt about it!

Yet without some clear account of what it is that is preserved by a correct translation (in a different language) of a false sentence, the Nyāya theory of meaning looks genuinely handicapped. Unlike the Nyāya philosophers, who seem to be carried away by the unthinking, unsuspecting character of most serious information-transmission, the Buddhists seem to have been clearer about the gap between getting the message and believing in it. As we have already noted, they (Buddhists who were not absolute skeptics) would allow that sometimes from heard words of a known language we can infer that the speaker wishes to make his audience believe that what the words mean is really the case. In the West, on the other hand, knowledge of sentence-meaning could be taken, by some philosophers, at some time, to be direct: the auditor could be said to be able to read the meaning immediately *off* the utterance; yet that knowledge would never amount to knowledge *that* what the sentence means is actually the case. It is at this crucial point that mainstream Western epistemology of linguistic communication has clung to one piece of wisdom as beyond dispute: *A cannot know that what B said is true unless A first knows what B said.*

Is it possible that the above wisdom itself is a case of being duped by surface grammar? You cannot come to know that Mary is sick unless you know Mary. But is "What B said" a singular term and "is true" a predicate like "Mary" and "is sick" are? The nature of the predicate "is true" keeps puzzling us as it puzzled Frege, who recognized that it was meaningful yet strictly non-additive.

The distinction between understanding and sentence-generated belief or knowledge is, however, not solely based on the above piece of wisdom. To *understand* the word "Saddam Hussain" is to know *who* it refers to. But knowing (i.e., being acquainted with) Saddam Hussain is neither necessary nor sufficient for this latter sort of *knowledge who*. Analogously, to understand the utterance "Bush will be re-elected" is

to know *what it means*. Knowing that Bush will be re-elected is neither necessary nor sufficient for it. Understanding is knowledge *what* rather than knowledge *that*.

To take Matilal's catchy example, when the language teacher asks the student to translate the sentence "You owe me a million dollars" – the student understands it, i.e., knows *what* it means without the slightest tendency to believe (let alone *know*) that she owes the teacher a million dollars. What can be more straightforward than this simple distinction between comprehension and acceptance?

Nevertheless, here as elsewhere in philosophy such an innocuous point leads to mighty metaphysical constructions. When the beliefless listener merely understands an utterance, *what* does she know? When acceptingly, nonacceptingly, doubtfully, or perhaps without any specific doxastic attitude – I just know *what* you meant by an utterance – what is the object of my knowledge? In answer to this inevitable question we are offered propositions, meant-contents, possible states of affairs, Fregean thoughts and other such truth-or-falsity bearers. Such entities, surprisingly enough, were foreign to the Indian philosophers of language in spite of all the profundity and sophistication with which they argued about Grammar, logic, epistemology and poetics. The Grammarian philosophers liked to distinguish between meanings which 'exist only in the intellect' from meanings which 'exist in the external world'; but even they would not claim to have hit upon a third realm in between the mental and the physical where understandable contents could be lodged (*Samvāda: A Dialogue Between Two Philosophical Traditions*, published by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research in 1991, records interesting exchanges just on this issue). The response of a contemporary creative interpreter of the Nyāya tradition of Indian philosophy to this idea of propositional content has been translated from Sanskrit for this anthology (see Badrinath Shukla's article).

The problem for a nonskeptical descriptive epistemologist of testimony is the following: He must give a coherent and credible account of acquiring knowledge from hearsay which does not confuse uptake with trust and yet avoids requiring a mandatory inferential passage from what is said to what is the case.

If knowing the meaning of a true-reporter's utterance is, thus, routinely seggregated from getting informed as to how things stand in the world, it becomes *natural* to posit propositions as objects of the former sort of Knowledge. Now, a Nyāya semanticist would be

temperamentally opposed to such *contents* intervening between strings of words and sequences of objects, properties, and relations. The Indian realists' reluctance to countenance any abstract objects like propositions and meanings distinct from the individual speaker's mental/cognitive episodes and extensional objects – should not be diagnosed as a consequence of any nominalistic bias. A staunch believer in abstract particulars (e.g., unrepeatable tropes like colors, smells, contacts) and a distinct set of timeless non-particular reals (e.g., substanceness, humanity, colorhood), a Nyāya metaphysician has no problems at all with positing non-spatiotemporal yet non-mental entities. Indeed, as a result of being an object of awareness (even if the awareness proves mistaken) – upon the later Nyāya theory – an ordinary item of reality acquires a foisted relational property which has been called "contentness" (see Matilal's brief discussion of the Nyāya theory of contenthood in his paper for the present volume). You can give additional cognitive-relational *roles* to ordinary worldly objects in order to account for our non-factive talk about what something is merely *thought* to be. But such cognitional roles are parasitic on actual items of reality which assume them. What the Nyāya semanticist resists is the admission of a separate realm of self-standing objectives just to serve as the contents of this pre-acceptance attitude which goes by the name of 'comprehension'. Modes of presentation, for them, should be just *modes* – rather than independent constituents of thoughts which can subsist without anyone's thinking. Part of the problem could be merely linguistic. English does, and Sanskrit does not, have 'that'-clauses, so that the distinction between "the blue jar" and "that the jar is blue" is sometimes difficult to convey in Sanskrit. But this difficulty is easily overcome. There is a deep philosophical issue here which Matilal and Shukla try to grapple with in their papers from within a Nyāya conceptual framework.

However appealing the uniqueness-school's case for direct knowledge-acquisition from a "telling" utterance may be (to philosophers like Welbourne), and however attracted one might feel towards their Quine-like elimination of Fregean contents, any such account of verbal transmission of knowledge *must* explain how we can *fail* to have knowledge that *p* while fully and correctly understanding a sentence which means that *p*. Such failure can result in at least the following seven ways:

(i) S, in saying "A is f," has lied. H understands and believes him.

(ii) S mistakenly believes that A is f and says so. H understands his statement and believes in it.
(iii) S says jovially or fictionally, "A is f." H understands what S said and knows it to be non-true (because he gets the joke, etc.).
(iv) S sincerely and truly says, "A is f." H understands him but does not trust him or take him seriously.
(v) S truly says, "A is f." H understands it but is convinced that S does not himself believe that A is f, although H himself is ready to take it as true.
(vi) S says, "A is f" when A is really f. By the time H hears and understands it, A has ceased to be f. By believing that A is f, H acquires a false belief.
(vii) S falsely believes and states "A is f." By the time H understands the utterance and acquires belief that A is f, it has turned true. So an utterance generated by error generates in its turn a true belief. Does H *know* that A is f?

Some of the above cases would be easy for the Nyāya framework to handle. But as Mohanty would suspect, the Nyāya notion of 'Pramā' (true cognition) may be so divergent from the Western notion of "knowledge" – that in the problem cases like (v) and (vii), the Nyāya answer would be that H acquires a 'Pramā' – although through a somewhat inappropriate route! After all, doesn't Gangeśa admit that a talking bird or a child parroting an adult can give us *knowledge*? But these differences of conception cannot just be allowed to sit there as merely terminological matters. As D. M. Datta ("Testimony as a Method of Knowledge," *Mind*, vol. xxxvi, N. S. No. 143) noted long ago, the slackness about the justification-condition of knowledge shown by the Nyāya epistemologist could be due to the deeper point that the question of justification arises at the level of *claiming that one has known* (in the face of an actual or anticipated challenge) rather than at the first level of *knowing*. If the attempt to deceive is not suspected, then the deluded deceiver's (accidentally true) statement that *p* will give rise to the hearer's acceptance of *p*, somewhat like the seventh case discussed above. The cognition processed out of the sentence by H will then be true, but the ground given on demand of his *claim* of knowledge will be illicit. If you believe that there is no knowledge without knowledge of knowledgehood then H does not know that *p* in such an instance. But sometimes, the Nyāya externalist insists, truth or in its wake, even

justification (understood reliabilistically as expistemologically meritorious causal lineage), can creep into our belief without our knowledge just as falsity often does. We shall return briefly to this theme of epistemic *luck* in the next section.

Gangeśa discusses the interesting case of coming by a true belief through an unsuspecting reception of information conveyed by a deluded deceiver (see pages 284–285 of Mukhopadhyaya 1991). Suppose that on a Tuesday a cheat mistakenly believing it to be a Monday says "Today is Tuesday." If the listener does not suspect him to be a cheat he would "understand" that today is Tuesday. What he would understand surely would agree with facts. Gangeśa uses this as a counter-example to the reductive inferential account of word-generated knowledge. As an inference from the general trustworthiness of the speaker in question it will be unsound – because the speaker is neither truthful nor well-informed. Indeed his ill-informedness cancels out the effect of his deceitfulness! But in order to show that as an inference it is unsound, yet as a word-generated awareness it is a piece of knowledge – Gangeśa must treat such a case as a case of *knowledge*.

Recent interpreters of Gangeśa rightfully feel uncomfortable with this. One of them clearly asserts that Gangeśa only regarded such utterances as true by fluke but failing to qualify as a *bona fide* "means of knowledge" (Pramāṇa) (See Mukhopadhyaya, 1991, p. 285).

Whether the "Pramā" of Nyāya is merely *true belief* or something closer to knowledge because of its required causal link with generally truth-conducive "means of knowledge" – remains a hard and open question.

4. THE PRESENT PROJECT: BRIDGING TWO AREAS AND TWO TRADITIONS

The theory of knowledge and the philosophy of language are two areas which have been immensely enriched in the present century by Western Analytic philosophers. In some sense, linguists, psychologists and philosophers have also cooperated to develop an intermediate area of research concerning the nature of knowledge of a language (take the debate between Chomsky, Lewis and Dummett, regarding what is it that we know when we know a language). Some attention has also been paid to the epistemology of understanding (c.f., Parret and Bouveresse, eds., *Meaning and Understanding*, de Gruyter, 1981). But except for

sporadic efforts (see Bibliography at the end of this introduction), no systematic field comparable to the thousand years' Indian Polemics about the status of word-generated awareness has developed within the Anglo-American analytic tradition which is exclusively concerned with the nature, extent, conditions and possibility of knowledge (*about the world*) from language. It is this lacuna which our volume intends to begin to fill.

Wrongly associated with religious faith and irrational credulity, testimony has been branded by some contemporary writers as "a rotten way of acquiring belief, and no way at all of acquiring knowledge" (see Jonathan Barnes' quotation in Welbourne's paper in this volume). Yet, as Strawson argues in his mood-setting little piece in this volume, perception, memory and testimony are all on a par as independent foundations for the social edifice of knowledge on the basis of which even most of our skeptical arguments thrive. Sextus Empiricus's writings are replete with interesting snippets from reported science, history and hearsay – anthropology of his time. Precisely because observation, memory and word-generated knowledge are interdependent, Strawson submits, any one of them cannot be reduced to the others. Much of our adult perception and thought are "powered by the word."

Now, the connection between thought and talk, between perception and language, has been a hot topic of discussion and debate in classical Indian philosophy (see Matilal's *Perception* and *The Word and the World* – two books which make much of these Indian materials available in the analytic idiom). But professional analytic philosophers of the English-speaking world have never taken any notice of this literature. Of course there have been eminent Sanskritists in the West over the last two centuries. Also, on the other side, almost every practising philosopher in India now has been nourished by the ideas of Russell, Wittgenstein, Ayer and Quine. But the popular image of Indian philosophy in the contemporary West is still that of a bunch of mystical religious non-analytic life-philosophies. It is, however, no part of the purpose of this volume to counteract this elective insulation *in general*.

When the traditional Sanskrit-speaking scholars (who still carry on, in India, the indigenous lineage of philosophy of language and knowledge) were for the first time exposed to themes like Russell's theory of propositions or Frege's sense/reference distinction or the problem of proper names – their creative response took the Western-style 'philosophers' of India by surprise. In this book we try to give a flavor of such

responses through the papers by Shukla (translated from Sanskrit) and V. Bhattacharya (translated from Bengali). Thus, the second gap that this volume tries to bridge is between contemporary Western and classical Indian traditions – because luckily we can still make the latter speak to live issues through these 'pandits' who teach and write in a method untouched by any Western influence.

Mohanty supplies a basis for this comparative exercise by first providing a quick overview of the traditionally accepted adequacy-conditions (as enunciated by ancient Nyāya) for an (oral) utterance to be knowledge-yielding. Temporal *contiguity* and mutual *expectancy* of the words, the *fitness* of their meanings to each other are counted as specially important conditions. Notions like *fitness* crop up again and again (e.g., in Matilal's paper on understanding) in the context of the rival Vaiśeṣika school's attempt to reduce testimonial knowledge to reasoning on the basis of *fitness* of the meant content or trustworthiness of the source, etc. Mohanty summarizes the Nyāya school's replies to such reductive attempts. But he ends in a skeptical vein by suspecting that the Nyāya theory of verbal knowledge has no satisfactory account of trustless uptake or, for that matter, of *knowledge* of the meaning of a *false* sentence.

Among post-Lockean Western philosophers, Thomas Reid seems to have been the most sensitive to what Keith Lehrer has called 'Social Knowledge'. Reid held a somewhat Nyāya-like view that we do not need justification for knowing facts from others' true reports. We need justification to *distrust* them. Lehrer starts his essay by rejecting this 'strong presumptive right thesis'. Because perhaps he is committed to the tradition which takes the so-called "K → K.K" thesis for granted, he would not grant the status of knowledge to any belief which has been extracted from an utterance unless the source of the utterance has been tested for reliableness and reasonableness of largely coherence-based criteria.

Ernest Sosa broaches the theme of comparing testimony with memory – a theme elaborately discussed by McDowell and Dummett. (Incidentally, the Sanskrit word for memory – "Smrti" – is also used for religious texts which were regarded as authoritative sources of knowledge of what should or shouldn't be done.) He raises the question of what sort of justification one needs to claim knowledge on the basis of an unsuspected speaker's say-so. His answer is given in terms of a system of "meta-knowledge" or epistemic perspective – sanctioned by which testimony remains a *basic* source of knowledge.

From the Indian side, next, Shibajiban Bhattacharya supplies us an enormous amount of information about ancient Indian answers to questions like: "What does one *hear* – sounds or words? How is written language related to the spoken? What are the qualifications that a hearer must possess in order to be a competent decoder of knowledge from language?" The most interesting and radical upshot of Bhattacharya's paper which examines in great detail some contemporary accounts of testimonial evidence using formal epistemic logic, is the following claim: Both the classical J. T. B. definition of knowledge and the thesis that knowledge requires knowledge of knowledge cannot be accepted together. Either one of them or perhaps both have to be given up.

Later in the anthology, even Michael Welbourne revolts against the justified true belief account of knowledge, although his emphasis is more on the generic distinction between *belief* and *knowledge*. What is fascinating is that an examination of the hitherto-neglected phenomenon of handing down knowledge through words throws up such fundamental challenges to the modern orthodoxies in epistemology!

But the challenges do not go unanswered. An ardent defender of justificationism, Elizabeth Fricker looks upon all these tendencies to abolish the requirement of belief-grounding reasons as retrogressive reliabilist misconceptions. She gives the following vigorous argument against the Nyāya-like strategy which Chakrabarti defends in his paper: No hearer can be said to derive *knowledge* (properly so-called) from an utterance unless the hearer has grasped the notion of assertion. (Even Nyāya doesn't want to depict knowledge-dissemination through words like automatic indoctrination by an injected magic-potion!) To master the notion of assertion is to be aware of the possible gap between *it being the case that p* and *it being asserted that p*. One who does not need any *argument* to earn the right to believe that *p* from merely perceiving that *p* has been asserted in not aware of such a gap. The simple truster does not need any such argument (*a la* Reid and Gangeśa). Hence the simple truster cannot be said to derive knowledge from an utterance.

We have seen before that the 'uniqueness-school' which refuses to reduce testimony to inference has problems with covering this gap between comprehending and accepting. Julie Jack, who has sympathies both with the 'uniqueness'-view and with the knower's need for *reason*, tries to cut a middle ground. She unravels the complex relationship between getting the message and point of an utterance and the distinct but intimately related attitude of being ready to believe in the message.

Acceptance can be *reason*-based (as Fricker requires) without being based on any explicit *reasoning* from bridging generalizations and independently established occasion-specific knowledgeableness of the speaker. Just as the passage from 'I seem to see a table' to 'I see a table' and then to 'There is a table here' could not be inferential, similarly the passage from 'S has asserted that it is raining' to 'S has asserted the fact that it is raining' – and then to 'It is raining' – needs to be reasonable and undefeated by evidential obstacles but perhaps could never be noncircularly justified in terms of general *premises*.

Lockean individualism and the concomitant celebration of conscious rational control over our epistemic attainments had blinded us to one obvious fact: We may have some control over our degree of confidence and our evidential strength, but *truth* is beyond our control. In inference-assisted perception, memory, or inference – insofar as there is a time-lag between the acquisition of the foundation and the claim of the end-belief – knowledgehood may always lapse. So McDowell recommends an externalist admixture with the basic idea of "good standing in the space of reasons." Not only truth, perhaps even justifiedness is to some extent contingent upon the presumed favorableness of external circumstances. This concession to the ideas of epistemic luck entails that whether what one possesses is justified, reasonable, i.e., at all knowledge – or not, is partly outside the control of the knower and left at the mercy of the world. Given this heavy dose of externalism, it would be doxastically responsible to pick up knowledge which has been placed in the putative domain through intelligible expression by any competent speaker who is *not* known to be a liar, joker, or habitually misinformed talker.

Coady, to whom we have already referred above, takes up Hume's challenge and argues for the strong thesis that any attempt to justify our acceptance of what others (scientific experts or eyewitnesses to an unrepeatable episode) say in terms of our own previous observations is destined to fail. The full implication of Coady's argument will be quite drastic for what I have discussed in the last section on the basic Fregean wisdom behind mainstream analytic philosophy: You cannot know that what S said is true unless you know what S said. If, as Coady insists, all knowledge of meaning presupposes knowledge by presumptive acceptance, then surely some acceptance is possible *without* a belief-free knowledge of meaning, on pain of circularity or regress!

Michael Dummett starts with an incisive analysis of the epistemic

status of memory-based knowledge. Like memory, trusted words of an authority (or, as McDowell's tourist found, of a stray pedestrian who is assumed to be knowledgeable about road-directions) does not yield new knowledge but helps *preserve* knowledge already acquired. If memory is questioned, an individual loses his past. If testimony is questioned, the individual disinherits himself from the doxastic resources of society and along with it loses the very social institution of language. Dummett would agree with Welbourne that knowledge is "commonable". One would expect that the indispensability of testimony will be acknowledged at least in a discipline like history (besides being crucial to the law-court). But Gordon Brittan shows that there are at least *two* types of skeptical arguments which have been developed against taking testimony on its face-value by philosophers of history. The "old" skepticism directly questions the validity of the inference: Such and such document or oral traditions reads/reports R; therefore, it was the case that R. And of course it was the point of Nyāya defenders of the uniqueness of word-generated knowledge that as an *inference* any such move is quite useless. In the face of this attack, however, eminent thinkers like Thucydedes, Hume, and Collingwood defend historical knowledge from reports. But Brittan is more intrigued by the more radical "new" skepticism which argues that even the author's original intentions and beliefs (let alone the facts which led to those attitudes) can never be retrieved from the linguistic utterances which survive through history. Brittan takes these two skepticisms as it were by a single stroke and argues that any global distrust of historical testimony is inconsistent with the claim that one even understands what one is questioning. It is not clear what stand Brittan would take in the reducibility versus *sui generis* debate but he categorically asserts that through a generally trustful interpretation of recorded utterances we can conduct a dialogue with the past which would be impossible if the "new" skepticism could stand unrefuted.

Saha's paper gives us a sample of the technical difficulties faced by mediaeval Indian philosophers of linguistic knowledge regarding self-referential utterances and quotation. It is the only paper in the collection which retains the language-specific niceties of a Sanskrit original source. But the problem has general contemporary relevance. In making rules involving, e.g., verb-roots, Sanskrit grammarians had to refer to linguistic elements by using those very linguistic elements. Giving homophonic names to letters, words, phrases and entire sets of sentences (e.g., a hymn) created a special problem of apparent equivocation. Thus Saha gets into

a subtle discussion of the New Nyāya account of grasping metaphorical or secondary meaning (what Matilal translates as "indication" after the Sanskrit word *Lakṣaṇā*"). Here, as in more straightforward metaphorical contexts, the hearer moves from the literal or direct meaning to a non-literal or metaphorical meaning simply because he takes the speaker to be talking sensibly and *plausibly*. But the steps of the passage from "first meaning" to auto reference or metaphorically extended meaning are hotly debated. (One should recall here that from the first century B.C. Sanskrit Grammarians held that words stand for themselves first, because they would use words self-mentioningly to make rules about them.) Once again, a comparison with G. E. Moore's remarks on "Autonymous use of Words" (Commonplace Book P-167) can help us locate the problem of Saha's paper in a contemporary context.

Whether fellow-humans speak of the world as they saw it, or of their own minds or of their words themselves, words open up other times, other people, other areas of knowledge to us. Yet currently standard works on epistemology seldom contain any serious treatment of knowledge directly extracted out of knowledge-generated utterances except by way of *contrast*; e.g., telling us that the printed words inside a fortune-cookie never yield knowledge!

The obstinacy which makes us deny that epistemically respectable scientific, historical, social and psychological information is constantly derived from intelligible statements made by *others* may also lie at the root of one culture's studied refusal to learn from the theoretical successes and failures of another.

Perhaps the Nyāya insistence on irreducibility of testimony as a source of knowledge could be eventually proved ill-founded (as the Vaiśeṣikas otherwise sympathatic to the general Nyāya drift of philosophizing argued: See P. K. Mukhopadhyaya (1991) – Chapter 9).

But by relieving the cultural loneliness of Western philosophers of language and knowledge this volume hopes at least to enable each tradition to learn from the mistakes of the other. Who knows, while searching for mistakes, one might also find a truth or two.

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P. F. STRAWSON

KNOWING FROM WORDS

No one disputes that much, probably the greater part, of our knowledge is derived from hearing what others say or reading what others have written. It is also indisputable that much, though not all, of what we thus hear or read we accept without question as true. In brief, a great part of our systems of belief rests upon testimony. The question is whether we are to regard testimony, so understood, as a direct and immediate source of belief based upon it or whether we are to regard belief so based as being, in the last resort, essentially the product of other, more fundamental sources of knowledge, or, in brief again, is testimony, as a source of knowledge (or belief), *reducible* to these other sources?

To make any progess with this question, we must clearly enquire what these other sources might be. What are held, by those inclined to a reductionist answer, to be the *basic* source of our knowledge of the world about us? Perception, memory and inference are the traditional candidates. But inference, though naturally destined for a role in any likely reductive account of the contribution which testimony makes, cannot itself be, in the strictest sense, a basic source of knowledge. For inference requires premises; and though, in any given inference, some of its premises may themselves be inferentially derived, the process must, in the last resort, rest on foundations which are not inferential. This fact does not, of course, disqualify inference from playing a part in a reductive theory. It merely indicates that its role must be subordinate to that of the other members of the cast.

What of the other members? How do perception and memory stand in relation to testimony as sources of knowledge? Well, even the most committed anti-reductivist must acknowledge that perception is a necessary condition of the acquisition of knowledge from testimony. We cannot *acquire* beliefs from the written word without looking and seeing; nor from the spoken word without listening and hearing. And a parallel admission is required in the case of memory. For, first, we cannot *retain* knowledge thus acquired without remembering what we have thus learned; and, second, even the acquisition of such knowledge or belief requires that we understand the sentences that we read or hear, and this

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in its turn invokes a form of memory, viz. our retention of our acquired knowledge of the language to which the sentences belong.

It is worth adding a further point. The joint exercise of both memory and perception is not only a *necessary* condition of the possession of *all* knowledge or belief derived from testimony; that joint exercise may be a *sufficient* condition of the possession of *some* knowledge, the acquisition of which is in no way at all dependent on testimony. I use the modal 'may be' because some philosophers (e.g. Davidson) would dispute the thesis that anyone can so much as have beliefs without being an 'interpreter' of the discourse of others. But this seems an implausible contention. The 'wild boy of Aveyron' surely had some beliefs, indeed some knowledge, of the resources of his environment before he was discovered, taken into human society and given some rudimentary linguistic instruction. (He never progressed far). So here, if I am right, is one respect in which testimony cannot be on a *perfectly* equal footing with perception and memory as a source of knowledge.

However, the case of such rare individuals, in a state of complete isolation from human and linguistic communities, is of only moderate interest in itself and is, in any case, irrelevant to our present concern. For that concern is precisely with human beings living in a community and equipped with knowledge of the language current in that community. And even though, as previously remarked, the exployment of perception and memory is a necessary condition of the acquisition and retention of any knowledge (or belief) which is communicated linguistically, it does not immediately follow that such acquisition of knowledge (or belief) is *reducible* to the exercise of those faculties, supplemented by inference. For no account of such a reduction is remotely plausible, if it is supposed to hold generally; and if it is not supposed to hold generally, the reducibility thesis is abandoned.

The last qualification is important. No one doubts that there are occasions on which, when we are told or read something, we, at least temporarily, and perhaps, permanently, withhold assent to, or belief in, what we are told or read, perhaps because it strikes us as intrinsically implausible, perhaps because of doubts about the reliability (trustworthiness or competence or both) of the speaker or writer in question. If, on such occasions, we finally accept what we are told or read as true, incorporating it in our belief-system, we do so as a result of some further process of assuring ourselves of the reasonableness of accepting what we are offered as genuine information. In such cases understanding

and acceptance have genuinely come apart; the transition from the former to the latter is mediated by whatever steps, possibly merely mental steps, are taken in the process of self-assurance; and the testimony cannot, in such cases, be viewed as a direct and immediate source of the belief we arrive at.

However, there are several points to note about this:

(1) In many cases the checking process just alluded to consists in nothing other than seeking confirmation from other sources of testimony: we consult authorities or witnesses and normally accept the testimony of one or another of these, without further question, as clinching the matter. So even when testimony requires checking, it is normally just further testimony which supplies the ultimate check.

It may be objected that this is an inadequate reply to a reductivist point; for our ultimate acceptance of the purported information as genuine may be based on an inference from the *agreement* of diverse authorities to the *reliability* of those sources, an inference itself based on the presumption that truth is the best explanation of the convergence of diversely sourced judgments; or, again, we may have independent *grounds* for regarding one particular source as a fount of truth.

This may indeed be so in some cases; and when it is so, we cannot indeed regard the testimony on which we rely as a direct and unmediated source of knowledge. But it is not always so. There are powerful reasons for holding that it *cannot* always be so. This leads to the next point.

(2) It is clear that just as the purported information we receive from testimony may sometimes be erroneous, so our first-hand judgments of perception and memory may sometimes be erroneous. None of these sources of knowledge or belief is immune from error. Indeed error stemming from any one of these three sources may infect any of the others. But it is also true that the way in which each of us builds up his system of beliefs about the world is governed by certain powerful presumptions. One is the presumption that the beliefs a man acquires from direct first-hand experience of the world will generally be, *within the terms available to him*, substantially accurate. The other is the presumption that the elements of his world-picture or belief-system which are directly derived from testimony will also be, generally, substantially accurate. I call these 'presumptions'. But they are more than that. They are, rather, conditions of the possibility of the existence and use, in human communities, of the concepts of knowledge, accuracy, truth.

The knowledge (or belief) system of each member of the community is a highly complex fabric in which the strands of perception, memory and testimony are inextricably interwoven in such a way that none could be reduced to the others without unravelling the whole. Of course, perception has a distinctive role in so far as our knowledge (or belief) system has, at any moment, to accommodate those beliefs which, at that moment, current experience may force irresistibly upon us; but – setting aside the fact that it may be precisely an item of communicated information (testimony) that our current experience obliges us, at a given moment, to accept – it is quite generally true that what current experience does thus force upon us in the way of belief is a function of the character of the pre-existent system, i.e. is largely determined by beliefs already possessed, the sources of which will almost always include instruction or testimony.

(3) To reinforce the last point, consider the overwhelming extent to which *what* we in fact perceive, the very nature or character of our perceptual experience itself, is determined by the instruction, the information, we have received from the words of others. To apply (or as some would say, to misapply) a phrase of Wittgenstein's, much, perhaps most, of what we see we could not see *as* what we do see it *as*, without the benefit of such instruction. It is precisely from such instruction that the majority of the concepts which figure in any veridical account of our perceptions derive their origin. I see that the petrol gauge on my car reads zero. *Could* I see *this* if I had not been *told* that what I am looking at is an *instrument* with a certain specific *function*? I hear the clock strike twelve. Could I hear *this* without grasp of the concept of a clock and of the number system? And whence does this grasp derive? If we are to say, as we must, that the knowledge we derive from testimony depends on perception, must we not equally say that the knowledge we derive from perception depends generally on testimony, on verbally transmitted instruction and information? Kant said that intuitions without concepts were blind. In the present context we may modify the dictum and give it a more immediate relevance and resonance by saying: perception without the concepts and attendant information which derive from the spoken or written word is, if not blind, pitifully short-sighted. We need not say that the wild boy of Aveyron knows nothing at all; but we must assert that, however naturally acute his senses, they tell him, unaided, very little. The word is accessible only through perception; but perception, *our* perception, is powered and driven by the word.

My conclusion has already been foreshadowed. In any community of language-users, perception, memory and testimony are not only equally *essential* to the construction of the belief-or-knowledge-systems of its members. It is also true that all three are on an equal footing in that there is no possibility of a general reductive analysis of any one of the three in terms of the others, supplemented by inference. The inter-dependence of all does not entail the reducibility of any. If we (often) know, directly and immediately, what our eyes tell us, then we (often) know, no less directly and immediately, what other people tell us.

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IS THERE AN IRREDUCIBLE MODE OF WORD-GENERATED KNOWLEDGE?

One of the distinctive features of the Indian epistemologies is the recognition by most schools of philosophy of a type of cognition that is generated by words themselves. There were, to be sure, philosophies that did not countenance such a type of cognition. But every one took note of such a thesis, and those who did not recognise that sort of cognition felt obliged to argue against its claim to recognition. However, in order to correctly understand the issues involved, we must attend to the way the controversy was formulated. The question was: is *śabda* (word) a *pramāṇa*, a means of knowledge? The two key terms involved in this question need to be correctly understood. '*Śabda*' means sound or word, in the present context, it should be taken to mean an utterance of a sentence. This meaning needs to be further supplemented, but before we do that we need to determine the meaning of the other word '*pramāṇa*'. The rather well-known etymology (*pramîyate anena iti*) yields 'that by which one acquires true cognition'. In the latter phrase, 'by which' has to be construed in the 'instrumental sense', whereby we come to mean by '*pramāṇa*' the instrumental cause of true cognition. In the case of perceptual cognition, such an instrumental cause is the contact of the appropriate sense-organ with its object. The question, then, whether *śabda* is a *pramāṇa* amounts to asking, is the utterance of a sentence – under appropriate, yet to be specified conditions – a possible instrumental cause of a true cognition? In other words, do we sometimes and under appropriate circumstances acquire true cognition simply upon hearing an utterance of sentence? It does seem to be a quite plausible thesis that we do. Once the thesis is so recognised, the remaining task would be to provide a detailed account of the mechanism that is involved in the production of true cognition in such cases as well as specification of the conditions necessary for such a cognition to arise.

However, there is also a narrower, more restricted sense, in which the word '*pramāṇa*' is used, when one asks: is *śabda* a *pramāṇa*? One may agree that we do as a matter of fact come to know that something is the case upon hearing an utterance under appropriate conditions, but

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 29–49.

may nevertheless refuse to accept the thesis that what we have on hand is a distinctive type of *pramāṇa* other than one of the relatively uncontroversial modes of knowing such as perception and inference. (Note that in the last sentence, '*pramāṇa*' is used to mean a kind of knowing rather than the instrumental cause of a type of knowing. This also is a standard extension of the causal meaning of the word. Taken in this sense, the question is not only whether sometimes simply upon hearing an utterance we do not come to know that something is the case, but also whether such a knowledge, if it does arise, is not reducible to any of the other modes of knowledge.) '*Pramāṇa*', then, means not only a type of true cognition, also not merely the instrumental cause of the sort of true cognition under consideration, but also a type of true cognition which is irreducible to, not analysable into, any other sort. If we combine all these meanings, what we have is the idea of a distinctive, further irreducible, type of true cognition caused, brought about in a unique manner. Does hearing an utterance yield such a cognition?

There are then two different reasons why one may want to deny the thesis that *śabda* is a *pramāṇa*. One may either want to deny that merely upon hearing an utterance (under still to be specified circumstances) one ever comes to know that something is the case. Or, one may, while conceding that we do have such knowledge, want to hold that cases of such knowledge are reducible to other less controversial sorts. We may ascribe the former sort of position to the Buddhists and the latter to the Vaiśeṣikas. In this essay, I will examine these two sorts of argument against the thesis that *śabda* is a *pramāṇa*. But before I turn to that task, it is necessary that I recall, briefly though, the conditions that need to be specified for a reasonably good account of that thesis.

II

There are three sets of conditions that must be fulfilled, so that upon hearing an utterance, I may be able to make a justified claim that I know that something is the case. These conditions may be brought under three headings: utterer-conditions, linguistic conditions, and understanding-conditions.

A. *Utterer-conditions*

(1) The utterance must have an utterer. This seems to be analytically true, but is not really so. Today's technology permits utterances to be broadcast, which are not *being* uttered by the original speaker. One may hear such an utterance, over the radio or television, without seeing the utterer speak. In such cases, one may not be justified in advancing the cognitive claim that one knows on the basis of such hearing.

(2) *The hearer must be in the presence of the utterer when he makes the utterance*. This condition may be relaxed so as to include the cases such as watching a speaker speak over the television.

(3) *The utterer must be competent*. This competency-condition includes both an intellectual and a moral component. The utterer must (a) know what he is talking about,[1] and (b) be sincere and truthful.[2]

(4) *The utterer must be known to be competent*. For, even if the utterer is competent, but the auditor distrusts her, the auditor cannot advance a cognitive claim on the basis of such hearing.

Note that all these conditions are stated in terms of the utterer. The Indian philosophers, in discussing word-generated knowledge, considered the case of a speaker instructing a hearer and the latter acquiring knowledge on the basis of such instruction. In order to make room for knowledge that is acquired by reading a text, one needs to make suitable amendations. It seems to me that conditions A1 and A2 may just be deleted. In A3 and A4, replace "utterer" by "writer".

B. *Linguistic conditions*

The linguistic conditions are conditions of when an utterance is the utterance of a sentence. One has to exclude not only utterance of meaningless sounds but also of words that syntactically as well as semantically do not constitute a sentence. These conditions are four:

(1) *The condition of contiguity*: Utterances of words must follow one another in close temporal succession. If the speaker utters the word "Bring" and, after a minute, utters the word "cow", we do not just have a case of a sentential utterance. Some authors formulate this condition as one concerning cognition: the representations of the corresponding objects must take place in quick succession.[3] The two accounts are not meant to be rivals, they are rather complementary inasmuch as the two

processes (uttering/hearing and represenations of the objects meant) are supposed to go together.

(2) *The condition of syntactic intention*: Utterance of a word arouses expectation of a word from an appropriate syntactical category to follow. Without a word from that category to follow, the earlier word fails to convey a unified meaning. Thus utterance of a verb in the imperative mood, such as "close", arouses the expectation that the utterer will utter immediately afterwards a word from an appropriate object category such as "the door" or "the window" or "the suitcase". A definition of 'syntactic intention' would run thus: it is "the inability of a word to produce, without another word, an apprehension of the relation between the two words".[4]

(3) *The condition of semantic appropriateness*: The succeeding word must not only be syntactically appropriate as required by B2, but must also be semantically appropriate. Thus "Virtue is green" is syntactically allright, i.e. satisfies B2, but does not satisfy B3, which requires that the succeeding word must be from a semantically appropriate category. This condition, technically called "*yogyatā*", may be defined as "the absence of incompatibility amongst the meanings of the two terms".[5] The incompatibility is not formal logical, it is rather semantic, material.

Each of these conditions may be suitably modified so as to apply to written text. When these conditions are satisfied, there is, in the strict sense, a sentential utterance (or, a written sentence) capable of generating a true cognition in a competent auditor.

C. *Understanding-conditions*

Under these conditions are to be included the abilities of the hearer and also the cognitive steps that should occur in the hearer's mental life. These conditions are the following.

(1) *Knowledge of syntactical and semantic appropriateness*: The conditions B2 and B3 state conditions that must be satisfied in order that an utterance (or a text) be a sentence capable of generating a true cognition. But it is also necessary that the hearer recognises, or rather, has a cognition of such appropriateness. Thus he may mistakenly perceive appropriateness of either sort where there is none: in that case he will have a word-generated cognition, but that cognition will simply be mistaken.

(2) *Understanding the meanings of the words*: Obviously, the hearer cannot understand a sentence unless he understands the meanings of the component words.

(3) *Ability to unify the component meanings into one related meaning*: As one successively hears the word utterances, the appropriate meanings are presented to the hearer, but the sentential meaning is not simply a juxtaposition of unconnected word meanings, but is rather a unified whole in which the word meanings are appropriately connected together. What sort of cognitive ability is involved in this, need not be specified for our present purposes. The Indian philosophers differed sharply amongst themselves on this issue.

When all these three sets of conditions are satisfied, a sentential utterance by a competent speaker will generate in a competent hearer a true cognition (*pramā*) of whatever is being stated by the utterance. In case the sentence is ambiguous, we need another condition to be satisfied:

(4) Disambiguating a sentence, when necessary, by identifying the *intention* of the speaker (*tātparya*).

III

Against this theory, whose rough outlines have been sketched above, two kinds of objections can be, indeed have been, raised. One sort of objection questions whether at all any true cognition can be generated by spoken or written sentences, even when all the above conditions are satisfied. Another sort of objection concedes that there may indeed arise true cognition under such circumstances, but denies that such cognition is irreducible to any of the other less controversial kinds of knowledge.

I will first consider the second sort of contention. The Vaiśeṣikas are well known as holding the view that the so-called word-generated knowledge is in reality a case of inference. So while we do come to know various things upon hearing competent speakers, such knowledge is only a case of inference.

The argument, as stated by Vātsyāyana in his commentary on Nyāya-Sûtra 2.1.50 runs as follows: just as fire that is not perceived on the mountain top is inferred from the perceived smoke, so also the object of verbal instruction is inferred from appropriate words (*mitena śabdena*). As the Nyāya-Sûtra 2.1.52 explains, just as that inference depends upon

a valid relation of co-presence (*vyāpti*) between smoke and fire, so also in this case we have a relation of co-presence between a word and its meaning. In Jayanta's *Nyāyamanjarî*, a similar argument is ascribed to the Buddhist as well: inference and verbal instruction have this in common that they do not reveal an object immediately, i.e. perceptually, both depend upon a rule of co-inherence between the object made known and a mark. Jayanta introduces another argument why *śabda* is not an *independent pramāṇa*: a word can convey only the intention of a speaker but not an external object, because there is no certainty that the words of the speaker faithfully represent an external object. We can only correctly infer what the speaker intends to communicate by his utterance. So, on this new argument, the words uttered produce a correct inferential cognition only if what is inferred by the hearer is the intention of the speaker.[6]

The replies to these arguments generally take several different forms. First, there is a technical argument to the effect that it is not possible to give a satisfactory inferential structure for the cases under consideration. I say, these are technical, for they involve making use of the standard theories of inference (*anumāna*) in the Indian logics. These theories have their standard requirements for an inference to be valid, and it is generally claimed that the inferences that are produced with a view to capturing the cognitions generated by words do not satisfy those requirements. Another argument appeals to the introspective datum that in the cases under consideration the cogniser says "I have known this from the utterances of that speaker" rather than "I have inferred". Some other authors appeal to the psychological evidence that one grasps the meaning of the sentence uttered so quickly that there is hardly any time adequate enough for an inferential process to take place. Finally, there is an argument that in the cases under consideration there is no relation of invariable co-presence, for the same sound may mean different things in different parts of the world.[7]

The appeals to introspective data have been strong arguments within the Indian philosophical discourse. No one, excepting perhaps the Buddhists, considered the possibility of unconscious inferences which are not introspectively recognised as such. The time-lapse argument then would loose much of its force. To the last-mentioned argument to the effect that there is no invariable concomitance between words and things, Śrīdhara replies that there is concomitance between a certain activity on the part of the speaker and his intention to communicate

something to the hearer. Śrīdhara claims that it is on the basis of this concomitance that we can infer that these words have that meaning. But it is not clear how. For even if the general intention to communicate be always copresent with a speaker's utterance, that the speaker wants to communicate *this* meaning must somehow be known, and we are not told how this is to be inferred.

Let us therefore look at the possible inferential structures that may be adduced.

"These words ("Bring a jar") refer to the connection between their meanings, because they possess expectancy etc., just as my utterance

"Bring a jar" is." (1)

By "expectancy etc." is meant that the conditions B1–B3 are satisfied. The phrase "just as . . . " adduces an example, as required by the Nyāya syllogism, where the middle and the major are both co-present. In the case of my utterance, I know that the words satisfy the conditions B1–B3, and that they refer to the appropriate fact.

Another inferential pattern is given by:

"These meanings are related to each other, because they are presented by words which are characterised by expectancy etc., as are the meanings presented by my words "Bring a jar"." (2)

In (2), "characterised by expectancy etc." has to be understood as in (1).

Still another pattern:

"The statement consisting of words characterised by expectancy etc. precedes a knowledge of the relation between the meanings of those words, as in the case of my own utterance." (3)

A quite different sort of inference is ascribed to Dignāga by Vācaspati[8]:

"This utterance is correct, because it is made by a reliable person." (4)

It is easy to show that none of these inferences really serves the purpose. They all as a matter of fact presuppose a prior understanding of the meaning of the utterance under consideration. (4) establishes the truth of the cognition generated by the utterance, but there must be a cognition already generated before its truth needs to be established. In (1) through (3), the examples adduced are already understood, i.e. they are

taken as generating in their auditors the appropriate true cognitions. If this last cognition itself is to be shown to be a case of inference, then we need another such example, in which case there will be an infinite regress. It is interesting that in stating the Vaiśeṣika position, Viśvanātha recognises this situation when he adds: "dṛṣṭānte' pi dṛṣṭāntāntareṇa sādhyasiddhi".[9]

If the Vaiśeṣika position is that we *understand* the meaning of an utterance with the help of an inference, then that position must be seriously flawed. If the position is that we *know*, upon hearing an utterance, that what the sentence refers to is true, then an inference of the sort (4) may be a plausible candidate to do the job. What is to be noted is that even admitting this, one need not have to concede that for that reason our very cognition (whose truth is established, presumably, by an inference like (4)) itself is inferential. For, on the theory accepted both by Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, having a cognition and knowing that the cognition is true are two different things:[10] the former may be irreducibly word-generated, and the latter, in any case, on their theories, is inferential. The question that we are now discussing is, whether the former is also inferential or not. It seems, for reasons given, that the Vaiśeṣika reduction of *śabda* to inference cannot be carried out.

IV

In the just preceding section, we conceded that utterances under certain circumstances i.e. if certain conditions are satisfied, may well give rise to true cognition. We only questioned whether that true cognition can be reduced to inference.

In this section, we shall raise the more radical question, whether merely linguistic utterances can at all produce a true cognition of whatever the utterances are about.

In his commentary on Vatsyāyana's Bhāṣya on Nyāya-Sûtra 2.1.48, Uddyotakara anticipates three objections against the claim that linguistic utterances by themselves can generate a true cognition. The first is that words (or sentences) by themselves, i.e. if they are not heard, do not produce knowledge. Second, a word does not have an object of its own which is not presented by either perception or inference. Third, words do not reside in the soul (*ātmani asamavāyāt*), cognitions do. To these three objections, Uddyotakara then replies as follows: words nevertheless may generate knowledge, not by themselves but when heard. It is

not necessary – as against the third objection – that an instrumental cause of a cognition i.e. a *pramāṇa* must reside in the soul. It is to the second objection that we need to attend: are there such objects as are neither objects of perception nor objects of inference but are objects of word-generated knowledge?

This last question is decisive in our present context only if one holds the general position that there is, in a certain sense, a strict correlation between types of entities and types of knowledge. Thus one can hold that objects of perception are knowable only by perception, the objects of inference only by inference, and likewise objects of word-generated cognition only by such cognition. In other words, this general position would deny the possibility that one and the same sort of entity can be known by perception, inference and words. The Buddhist is well-known as subscribing to such a position, and on his theory there being only two kinds of entities, the bare particular and the universal concept, there are also two kinds of knowledge, perception and inference. At least that is the view presented by Dharmakîrti in his *Nyāyabindu*.

For my present purpose, I will not try to argue against such a position, and shall assume that it is just untenable. I will assume, that is to say, that one and the same thing (e.g. the fire on that mountain top) can be known either perceptually or inferentially, indeed by both. Subscribing to the theory then that there is no fixed correlation (*vyavasthā*) between types of entity and types of knowledge, however, does not preclude the possibility that there is some entity, or some class of entity, which can be known only in some specific manner and not in any other way. It is only in this sense, that I want to ask: is there any sort of thing that can be known by word-generated cognitions alone, and not by perception or inference.

Thus there are as a matter of fact two questions that I will be considering in that order: for one thing, can utterances of a speaker cause us to know something which we could have possibly known, given suitable circumstances, by perception (or by inference)? It is only after answering this, that I will ask the other question: is there some unique sort of object which can be known only by cognitions generated uniquely by utterances. Now, to the first question.

Consider first the case of objects that are sensuously perceptible, physical objects, animals and persons. *Ex hypothesi*, I am not at the moment perceiving the thing under consideration. But I hear (or read the utterance (or text) of a competent speaker (or writer) whom I know

to be competent. Let us assume that all the conditions laid down in II are satisfied. There is a quite uncontroversial sense in which I may be said to acquire knowledge of various things in this manner.

But I want to cast doubt on the obviousness of this sense by highlighting the following possibilities.

(i) Suppose the hearer believes the speaker to be competent, and so knows that *p* upon hearing the sentence '*p*' being uttered by the speaker. Suppose also that later on he finds out that the speaker was not competent. He still *understands* the sentence '*p*', although he cannot any longer be said to *know* that *p*. What sort of understanding is this, that falls short of knowing? Does the linguistic understanding of the meaning of the sentence undergo such a radical transformation when the speaker at first taken to be competent is subsequently found not to be so? To this one can respond by pointing out that should the speaker turn out to be incompetent, then the condition A3 would not be satisfied and consequently the cognition that is caused by the utterance should not amount to a true cognition. This is a perfectly satisfactory defense. But one may nevertheless want to ask: if the cognition is not true cognition, what then is it when either the speaker is incompetent but the sentence is true or the speaker is incompetent and the sentence is false? (The case where the speaker is competent, but the sentence is false is to be analytically ruled out.) One likely answer is not available to most Indian philosophers. According to this answer, what we have in such cases is a mere understanding of the meaning of the sentence, but no knowledge of the fact being stated either because there is no such fact (when the sentence is false) or because, even if there is a fact to be known when the sentence is true, this fact is not being grasped (just because the speaker is incompetent and so the condition A3 is not satisfied.) I want to look at this answer in two stages, corresponding to the two alternative possibilities it contains. To begin with the second alternative. If the sentence is true, there is a fact to be known. If the hearer knows the meanings of the component words and knows the syntactical and semantical appropriateness of the sequence of words, if he has the ability to unify the component meanings into one related meaning, the conditions B and C are all satisfied. What is it that shall prohibit him from knowing the fact stated by the (true) sentence? To insist that the conditions A3 and A4 are not satisfied, is to be legalistic, and not to give a satisfactory reason why those conditions after all are to be met. Why and how is the actual competence of the speaker supposed

to determine the cognitive status of the hearer's belief? It would appear that what is decisive is the truth of the belief (namely, that the fact obtains) and the belief that that belief is true (based upon the *presumed* competency of the speaker and not requiring actual competency). Subsequent discovery that the speaker was as a matter of fact incompetent, does not, it would seem, affect the status of the hearer's belief that *p* in case *p* is true. Why not then say that he would still be knowing that *p*, he has as a matter of fact a justified true belief.

It is quite otherwise if *p* is false and the speaker, at first taken to be competent, is found out not to be so. In this case, the claim to know that *p* is of course defeated just because *p* is false and not because the speaker is incompetent (for, as we just saw, an incompetent speaker may utter true sentences unless one stipulates that an incompetent speaker would always utter false sentences.) It is also possible that the discovery of the incompetency of the speaker may cause the hearer to have a doubt (Is *p* true?), which would lead him to withdraw his own cognitive claim (even if he has not yet discovered that *p* is false.)

(ii) The Indian epistemologist has only one word "*śābdabodha*" which may mean either "*understanding* the meaning of an utterance" or "*knowing* on the basis of such understanding". What we are concerned with in this essay is the latter. But what is also of central importance for correctly understanding the Indian theories regarding the latter, is the place of the former in the theory. In other words, does the theory of *knowing* entirely on the basis of hearing a speaker utter a sentence (assuming all the conditions enumerated above have been satisfied) admit of a theory of merely *understanding* the meaning of an utterance where such understanding does not yet amount to knowing. Many authors play on, and make use to their advantage, this ambiguity in the meaning of "*śābdabodha*". The distinction becomes crucial when we ask: what does a competent speaker of the language grasp when he hears an utterance which is false? He just cannot be said to know, for there is no fact to be known (since the sentence uttered is false). Or, if the hearer mistakenly took it to be true, he might have thought he knew but in reality he could not have known for the same reason as above. But knowing as he does the meanings of the component words and assuming that he also grasps the expectancy etc. characterising the sequence of utterances, he must be taken to have grasped a relational structure of meanings. But does the theory have a place for such grasping of meanings which is not also a true knowing that something is the case?

My answer is, 'no'. The reason, so it seems to me, is that the Indian philosophers of language whose views we are discussing now did not, generally speaking, distinguish between 'sense' and 'reference'. By 'meaning' of a word they understood the thing designated – either a universal property (as with the Mîmāmsakas) or a particular as characterised by that universal (as with the Nayiyāyikas). Understanding the meaning of a word was then construed as having the designatum (*padārtha*) presented (*upasthita*) before the mind. If the words are related by contiguity, syntactic and semantic appropriateness and if the speaker is mistakenly regarded as competent, there is no reason why the hearer should not also grasp a relational structure consisting appropriately of those word-meanings. But such a structure is not yet a fact, for the sentence, we assumed, is false. And yet there being no theory of 'sense', the theory of meaning being purely referential, one could not hold the view that what one grasped when one understood the meaning of a false sentence is a thought or a proposition. The theories under consideration did not countenance such abstract entities. What then does understanding false sentences amount to?

It seems then that the Indian epistemologists did not have a good account of our understanding of false sentences. A purely referential theory of meaning did not leave room for it. And yet a referential theory of meaning is needed for the possibility of a kind of knowing which is caused solely by hearing an utterence (under appropriate conditions). In this essay, I will not defend my contention that the Indian epistemologists did not countenance senses as different from referents. I recognise that there are exceptions to this generalisation. The Buddhists, for example, did distinguish between sense (as *apoha* or exclusion) and reference, but they also, partly because they drew that distinction, rejected the thesis that we can acquire knowledge solely on the basis of hearing an utterance.[11]

Now, there are two ways an account of understanding false sentences may be sought to be incorporated into the theory. One way is to follow the Russellian path (which many Nayiyāyikas did) of holding that although the component words have each their own meanings, the sentence itself when false does not have a compound meaning. While this gives a theory of meaning for false sentences, it does not as such give an account of what it is that we grasp when we understand a false sentence. The other alternative is to simply deny that we understand a false sentence. As such, such a position seems to be counter-intuitive.

But, the defender of this line of reply may point out that the impression that it is counter-intuitive is due to introducing a sense of "*śābdabodha*" (which takes it as linguistic understanding and not knowing) which the theory does not admit. Construed as a sort of knowing that is word-generated, there is no *śābdabodha* of false sentences. There is a seeming understanding, a seeming *śābdabodha*, a peculiar mental state (analysable into memory images of the referents of the component words) but not grasping of any complex unitary structure. Why not then simply deny that we understand a false sentence, that what we have is a pseudo-understanding, a mock-understanding, for the sake of which we need not introduce abstract Fregean entities into our ontology.[12]

We may still want to know what it is that prevents a grasping of sentential meaning from taking place? The answer would still be: there is no sentential meaning as an abstract entity in any case, and since the sentence is false, there is no relational fact in the world that could be grasped. So besides the word-meanings (i.e. the referents of the words) there is nothing else in the case of a false sentence. But let us persist: are not pseudo-understanding of a false sentence (before its falsity has been discovered) and genuine knowing on hearing a true sentence being uttered by a competent speaker, are not these two mental states phenomenologically indistinguishable and if so why should not there be a common description of them? What we are told, however, is that in the latter case there is a genuine grasping of something, in the former case there is no grasping of anything The defender of the line of reply that we are examining may point out that this indeed is no different from the case of mis-perception. When we see a snake where there is only a rope, the perceptual experience, before the error is discovered, is phenomenologically indistinguishable from the perceptual experience of seeing a real snake. But in one case we want to say there is a real perception, in the other a seeming perception. The account of understanding of a false sentence as a case of pseudo-understanding is not different from this account of mis-perception as only seeming perception, despite the fact that in both cases the phenomenological experiences are indistinguishable from their veridical counterparts. However, I want to raise two objections against this defense. First, if we are dealing with a Nayiyāyika, I would like to draw his attention to the fact that his account of pseudo-understanding of a false sentence is very different from his account of mis-perception. The difference between

the two accounts is so great that the analogy on which the just preceding reply rested is misleading. In the case of perceptual error, the Nayiyāyika defends the position that what we grasp is a relational structure, we do not have a mere bunch of unrelated objects. This position is advanced as against the Mîmāmsā thesis that in erroneous perception we do not grasp any relational structure. This view of the Nayiyāyika is indeed very different from the position being canvased now in the account of understanding of a false sentence: here, we are told, there is no grasping of a relational structure, there is only a bunch of unrelated word-meanings. The supposed analogy therefore with misperception is not there.

There is a further difficulty to contend with. In the case of perceptual error of seeing a snake where there is none, there is strong reason why the alleged seeing is only seeming seeing (of a snake). The reason is this: perception is caused, amongst others, by its own object. Since the snake that is allegedly being seen is just not there, it could not cause that seeing. So there is good ground for saying that the alleged seeing is only seemingly so. But in the case of word-generated cognition, as well as in the case of sentential understanding, what causes the cognition is the utterance (or the text) and not the fact which may obtain (if the sentence is true) or may not obtain (when the sentence is false). Consequently, the fact's not obtaining could not be a reason why there is no grasping of anything (just as the snake's not being there *is* a reason why there is no genuine seeing of a snake).

These arguments are intended to press the point that the phenomenological indistinguishability of the experiences of understanding an utterance when it happens to be true, and when it is believed to be true while really being false, cannot just be glossed over. What we need is a theory which can account for this indistinguishability *and* can also account for the difference between the two cases. This can only be done if we recognise that in both cases there is grasping of a thought, a sentential sense or a proposition, while only in the case of a true sentence there is a transition, as Frege would have said, from sense to reference, therefore to knowledge.

An upshot of this rather long-winded discussion is that the classical Nyāya theory of word-generated knowledge does not have the resources to give, at the same time, an account of our understanding of false sentences. What we need is a theory of understanding to be built into a theory of knowledge. What we need in other words is a theory of

true cognition of the sort under consideration, which would also contain a theory of mere understanding of the meaning of a sentence. The purely referential theory of meaning which the Nyāya swears by fails at this point. As a result, all the manouvers that the theorist makes end up by making all word-generated cognition to be by definition true.

An example of the last mentioned case is a proposal to interpret the idea of semantic appropriateness (condition B3) or *Yogyatā* in a sense such that false sentences would simply fail to satisfy this condition by definition.[13] Suggestions of such a construction are to be found in texts such as Viśvanātha's *Siddhāntamuktāvali*, where '*yogyatā*' is defined as "relatedness of the referent of one word to the referent of the other word".[14] *Tarkasamgraha* defines it as "absence of contradiction amongst the referents of the words".[15] Now each of these may be understood in the weaker sense of absence of incompatibility or in the stronger sense of just truth. In a false sentence, then, since the referents are in reality not together, there is contradiction in reality and hence a lack of *yogyatā*. On this restricted interpretation, then, a sentence 'a is F' is characterised by *yogyatā* (not to be construed, as we have done, as semantic appropriateness) only if a is F. Under this construal, a false sentence does not satisfy the condition B3, and so cannot produce true cognition. But notice that by collapsing the idea of '*yogyatā*' with 'truth', the account rules out analytically, by a stipulation by fiat as it were, the possibility of genuine understanding of a false sentence. It as a matter of fact makes truth a condition of sentence-understanding. As a consequence, it contradicts the Nyāya theory of 'extrinsic validity' (*parataḥ prāmāṇya*) in the case of word-generated cognitions, making cognitions of this sort "intrinsically" true i.e. true by virtue of their very "birth", so that the idea of a false word-generated cognition is reduced to a contradiction.

(iii) Finally, I would like to draw attention to perceptual demonstrative sentences such as "That white horse is running". A speaker, both competent and believed to be competent, utters the sentence. She is competent because her utterance is made simultaneously with actually seeing the white horse running. The speaker can point as "that" only to what is being perceived at a distance. Shall we say the hearer can know *that* horse to be running only if he too perceives the same event, besides understanding the meaning of the utterance. If he is not also seeing that that horse is running but only hears the utterance, he will know that a horse whom the speaker is pointing out is running but he still would not be knowing

which one is it. In other words, his knowledge would be not *de re* but *de dicto*: he would not be knowing of any particular white horse that it is running. To be able to distinguish between *de re* and *de dicto* knowledge (which, to be sure, is not the same as the distinction between knowing and mere understanding as I made it earlier) one needs to be able to distinguish between a proposition and the thing about which the proposition holds good, and one does not have this latter distinction unless one has also a prior distinction of some sort between sense and reference. (In this last sentence, I add "some sort" in order to take into account various strategies of recovering that distinction within purely referential theories such as possible worlds semantics.) The Indian philosophers do not have that distinction, and so cannot distinguish between *de re* and *de dicto* knowledge. All knowledge is *de re*. The so-called proposition is rather construed as a compound object.[14]

But there is a distinction between the cognition generated by "A horse is running" ("*kaścit aśvo dhāvati*") and the cognition generated by "That horse is running" ("*Ayamaśvo dhāvati*"). How would the latter cognition be different from the former, in case the hearer is not seeing a horse in any case but only hearing the utterances? Will he be able to grasp the horse *as limited by* that-ness? Will he be able to grasp that-ness (*tattā*) or thisness (*idaṅtva*) in the absence of himself actually looking and seeing? If not, can we still say that he knows *that* horse upon simply hearing the utterance? Shall we rather say that a demonstrative knowledge requires actual perceptual identification over and above, in this situation, hearing and understanding the utterance of a competent speaker?

Making use of an equivocation of the word "*śābdabodha*" I have argued that the Vaiśeṣikas are wrong in taking understanding linguistic meaning as a case of inference (for we do grasp something, we do not reason, and even if we did reason that would make use of some non-inferential grasping of meaning), but I have also argued that if there is any word-generated cognition in the strict sense, that cognition would remain *de dicto* and not be *de re* unless there is a perceptual backing. Thus it would seem that in the case of perceptible, external things, *śabda* cannot be an autonomous *pramāṇa*.

The defender of the thesis that there is an irreducible mode of knowing which is word-generated may insist that my contention at the end of the just preceding paragraph is totally beside the point. First of all, to say that word-generated cognition is not autonomous is not to say that it is

reducible to some other mode of knowing. All that I may be claiming is that it involves some perceptual knowing. In a certain sense, no one ever doubted that. It is for example quite uncontroversial that one must hear the utterance, and so have a perceptual cognition, before one can have a word-generated cognition. But this is true of inference as well: one must see the smoke on the mountain top in order to be able to infer the presence of fire there. There is also a second point that the defender of the thesis that there is an irreducible mode of knowing which is word-generated may want to press. The aim of the discussion about *de re* and *de dicto* knowledge would seem to be to emphasise that a word-generated cognition can only be *about* a thing, it cannot be *of* a thing. Making use of Russell's distinction, such a cognition is a knowledge by description but can never be a knowledge by acquaintance. It is, to go back to the example given, a knowledge that a white horse is running, but not of the white horse who is running. If this be my point, there are two possible responses to it. For one thing, if word-generated cognition is always knowledge by description that does not fundamentally contradict the thesis that it is a further irreducible mode of knowing. To insist that it is not perceptual, is to insist on something that is part of the thesis that one wanted to find fault with. Furthermore, ex hypothesis, we are now considering the question whether there is word-generated cognition of perceptible, external objects. In this very question, it is assumed that the objects under consideration can be known perceptually, and the question is, if the supposed word-generated cognition is other than perception and inference. To insist that it is not *de re*, for in order to be *de re* it has to be perceptual, is precisely to suggest that word-generated cognition is something unique. There is also another way the defender of the thesis may show that my criticism was not upto the mark. He may point out that the Nyāya position just does not allow for the sort of distinction I was drawing. Let us see how this is so. The distinction between *de re* knowledge and *de dicto* knowledge presupposes a distinction, not between sentences and things, but rather between propositional thoughts expressed by sentences and things. Now the latter is a distinction which the Nyāya realism does not countenance. All cognition in the Nyāya theory is about things, though about things in different respects, i.e. about things as limited (*avacchinna*) by different limitors.[15] In each such case, the cognition is about a compound thing i.e. a thing-as-limited-by-F, where F is a limiting property (*dharma*).[16] Perceiving a jar as a jar is also having the jar itself as object, though

as limited by 'jarness' and also by 'this-ness' (*idaṅtva*) inasmuch as there is a demonstrative element in perceptual reference. Where then is that pure *de re* cognition in which a thing is apprehended by itself, without any limitor? In this regard, one may say, there is no distinction, in principle, between word-generated knowledge of a thing and perceptual knowledge of that thing: in both cases there is knowledge of the thing as it is, for both, in case they are true, apprehend the thing as it is i.e. they both ascribe to the thing a property which belongs to it. There is therefore no reason to be worried about the fact that since word-generated knowledge does not amount to perceptual knowledge it need not be a distinct form of knowing. (It must be added that the Nyāya does recognise a sort of perceptual knowledge which does not have a limitor or rather whose object is not limited by a limitor, but which directly grasps its object. Such knowledge is non-linguistic, non-conceptual, cannot be expressed, but is posited only as a condition of the possibility of our familiar, linguistic, judgmental perceptions. The Nyāya needs such a mode of knowing in order to ground its realism and pluralism.)

The above defense of the claim of word-generated knowledge to be a genuinely irreducible mode of knowing, is indeed as strong as it can be. I must admit that it is difficult to crack it. I concede that denying autonomy to word-generated knowledge is not enough to defeat the thesis but at the same time I must add that denying autonomy is not merely insisting that word-generated knowledge involves perceptual knowledge (such as hearing an utterance) but also amounts to saying that there is a *demand* in this sort of knowing that the hearer go beyond hearing and verify things for himself, that he step into the shoes of the speaker who derived her competence from perception (in the case of perceptible, external objects). The hearer, to know the thing really well, has to be as competent as the speaker. Knowing on the basis of hearing the speaker is in this sense provisional, it has to fulfill itself by the hearer himself knowing the same thing without relying upon another source howsoever competent. Neither perception nor inference contains within its structure this asymmetry between two subjects: the speaker and the hearer, which generates an imbalance which needs to be removed. I am therefore tempted to suggest that with regard to the domain we are now considering (i.e. the domain of perceptible external things), word-generated knowledge claims recognition as a mode of knowing *sui generis* only because it presupposes that ability of the hearer to know

the thing for himself without depending upon the hearer's discourse *and* because this presupposition is *covered up* by the perceived need for discourse in view of the fact that not every one in reality can for himself know everything.

As far as the Nyāya denial of the distinction between propositional thought and things is concerned, I must say that the thesis about word-generated cognition is considerably strengthened by this denial as well as by the Nyāya conception of 'compound object'. My persistent concern now may be formulated in that very language. Just as a word refers to an entity, so does a sentence refer to a complex relational entity. To know the meaning of a word is to know what entity it denotes. The same holds good in the case of a sentence. To understand a sentence is to know what relational entity it designates. The word 'cow' means, denotes, refers to, either the universal cowness (on the Mîmāmsā theory) or a particular cow as possessing that universal (on the Nyāya theory). The sentence "The cow is white" expresses, means or refers to a relational structure whose components are the referents of "cow" and "white" (and the implied relation between them). If the cow over there is in fact white, there is an ontological structure: the individual over there, which possesses cowness, is characterised by an instance of color white, i.e. by a color-particular which again possesses the universal whiteness. Is it this structure that is grasped by the auditor who understands the sentence "The cow is white" uttered by a competent speaker? Since there is no sense to be grasped, what the auditor does apprehend is this very ontological structure. Now, in what sense is word-generated knowing a grasping of that ontological structure? Keep in mind that one may also perceive (visually) the very same relational structure. How is the purely linguistic grasping of that structure different, quâ grasping, from a perceptual grasping, when the latter also, on the Nyāya theory, is "shot through with linguisticality"? What is grasped is the same in each case. On the Nyāya theory, the causal conditions of the two are different. But are the two also different quâ grasping? Would it do to say that perceptual grasping of the cow over there is direct (*aparokṣa*) while linguistic grasping is indirect (*parokṣa*)? Or, should we rather say that the locution of 'grasping' is misleading. For, not all cases of knowing are cases of grasping. Only perception may be grasping, others are not.

What I have done in this essay is to raise various questions regarding the Nyāya theory of word-generated cognition. The questions do not demolish the theory, but they do rob it of its naive obviousness. The

theory perhaps needs a reformulation, which I am not at present prepared to offer. I must be said to the credit of the Nyāya philosophers that they did try to come up with a consistent and well-defended theory. But there are nevertheless various problems which, from within their discourse, they could not visualise. My purpose has been to offer comments which appreciate its strengths from within, but also seek to make it suspect from without. I am not prepared, as I was tempted at one time, to declare that the theory is just mistaken. I believe, its defects can be patched up, but that would require some major revisions of the overall Nyāya epistemology.

Earlier in this essay I had asked two questions: first, can utterances of a speaker cause us to know something which we could have possibly known, given suitable circumstances, by perception (or by inference)? The second question was: is there some unique sort of object which can be known only by cognitions generated by utterances (or texts)? I have dealt with the first question in some details in order to cast doubt on the claim that such word-generated knowledge of perceptible things is a mode of knowing *sui generis*. Even if this question is answered in the negative, the thesis of *śabdapramāṇa* is not thereby shown to be worthless. On the contrary, the main strength of the theory, and perhaps its original purpose, was to make room for a distinctive way of knowing about a domain of objects which cannot be known otherwise. There are rather two such domains: the alleged supersensible objects such as God, after-life, soul, *karma* which are all allegedly reals. The other domain consists of ethical duties (*dharma*). An issue far more decisive than the first question for Indian thought was: how do we know about such matters? Here the thesis of *śabdapramāṇa*, already established in the familiar cases of ordinary discourse, is found ready at hand. In this essay, I will not venture into that set of problems.

However, it must be said that since the theory does not distinguish between what sort of objects the utterances are about, in other words, since the conditions for word-generated cognition as laid down in section II of this article do not include anything specifying the nature of the things to be known, it would be unwarranted to hold that while the theory holds good in the case of one kind of objects, it does not hold good of another. If, for example, it turns out that simply on hearing a competent speaker (such as Śri Rāmakrishna) say that it is possible to visually see the goddess Kālî a hearer may not be justified in claiming that he *knows* that it is possible to see visually the goddess Kālî (and not one

of her images), then the entire theory needs to be seriously revised. To the conditions listed in this article, one would then need to add some condition regarding the nature of the thing that can be known in this way.

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NOTES

[1] "*Sākṣātkṛtadharmā*" (*Vātsyāyana Bhāṣya* on *Nyāya Sûtra* 1.1.7) Vācaspati in his *Tātparyatîkā* on 1.1.7. writes: "*sudṛdheṇa pramāṇenāvadhāritaḥ . . . padārtha hitāhitaprāptiparihāraprayojana yena sa*".

[2] "*Yathādṛṣtasya'rthasya cikhyāpayiṣayā prayukta*" (*Vātsyāyana Bhāṣya* on Nyāya Sûtra 1.1.7) The clause is needed, Vācaspati adds, because one may know the truth but owing to lack of compassion or due to laziness may not instruct; or, owing to jealosy, anger or intoxication may instruct what is false.

[3] Thus Annambhaṭṭa in *Tarkasamgraha* defines it as "*padānāmavilambeṇa uccāraṇam*" but in his *dîpikā* writes: "*avilambeṇa padārtho-pasthitiḥ sannidhiḥ.*"

[4] "*Yena padena vinā yatpadasyānvayānanubhavatvaṃ tena padena saha tasyākānkṣā.*" (Viśvanātha, *Sidhāntamuktāvalî* on *Kārikā* 84).

[5] "*artha'bādho yogyatā*" (*Tarkasamgraha*).

[6] Dharmottara in his Tîkā on Dharmakîrti's *Nyāyabindu* refers to the view that "*abhiprāyakāryācchabdājjātaṃ jñānamabhiprāyālambanaṃ sadarthamicchataḥ śabdaprayogaḥ*" (*Nyāyabindu* ed. Chandrasekhara Sastri, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras, 1954, p. 65). This view is ascribed by Stcherbatsky to Vinîtadeva (*Buddhist Logic*, Vol. 2, Dover, 1956, p. 167, fn. 4).

[7] Śrîdhara gives this defense in *Nyāyakandalî.*

[8] Vācaspati gives this inference in his *Tātparyatîkā* (ed. Dravid, Kashi edition, pp. 201–7).

[9] *Siddhāntamuktāvalî* on Kārikā 141.

[10] For this theory, known as *parataḥprāmāṇyavāda*, see my *Gaṅgeśa's Theory of Truth*, Second edition, Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1989.

[11] On this entire issue, cp. my forthcoming book *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought* (Oxford Universtiy Press, 1991).

[12] Cp. Arindam Chakraborty, "Understanding Falsehoods; A Note on the Nyāya concept of Yogyatā", *The Journal of the Asiatic Society*, XXVIII, 1986, pp. 10–20).

[13] Cp. Chakraborty's paper referred under note 12.

[14] See Sibajiban Bhattacharya, "Some Features of the Technical Language of Navya-Nyāya", *Philosophy East and West*, XL, 1990, pp. 129–49.

[15] On the concept of 'limitor', also see note 14 above.

[16] On the concept of 'property' (*Dharma*), see Bimal K. Matilal, *Logic, Language and Reality. An Introduction to Indian Philosophical Studies*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1985, esp. pp. 115–40.

KEITH LEHRER

TESTIMONY, JUSTIFICATION AND COHERENCE

Are we justified in accepting what others tell us? How important is the answer to this question in epistemology? Thomas Reid provided us with a positive answer to the first question backed by a theory to defend the answer.[1] We are justified in accepting what others tell us because we are naturally disposed to do so by our faculties and because we are naturally disposed to speak the truth. Since we are all naturally disposed to speak the truth, accepting what others tell us is a good strategy for accepting what is true. These contentions are explicit in Reid. There is a only slightly concealed premise that the objective of justification is to accept something if and only if it is true. It is clear that Reid held that the justification that we have for believing what others tell us is usually immediate, that is, is usually not the result of reasoning about their testimony. We must allow for the possibility that others, though speaking the truth as they see it, are in error and for the possibility that they might dissemble. When, however, we have no reason to think that they err or that they dissemble, we are justified in accepting what they say without any reasoning to support so doing. Acceptance of what others say is, in contemporary formulation, the default mode of mental operation.

Suppose that it is a first principle of our epistemology that we are justified in believing what others tell us, at least when we have no reason to doubt their veracity. That principle, call it the principle of testimony, would appear to suffice as the basic principle of epistemology. Why? Suppose that we wish to solve some traditional problem, the problem of other minds or the problem of perception, for example. If I ask another whether my perceptual beliefs are true when she perceives the same things I do, an automobile standing before us, for example, she will assure me that my belief is true. If, moreover, I am justified in believing what she tells me, I can justify my perceptual beliefs in this way. And there is the solution of the problem of external world. Ask somebody, and they will tell you. Similarly, ask somebody whether they have thoughts, feelings, and sensations, and when they tell you that they do, then you are justified in believing what they tell you. And there is the solution

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 51–58.

of the problem of other minds. The solution to all other epistemological problems will be no more taxing given the principle of testimony and a sufficiently loquacious discussion partner. All this appears too wonderful to believe.

Moreover, Reid himself did not believe it, for he thought it necessary to postulate distinct principles for the justification of different kinds of beliefs, those of perception, for example, rather than taking the principle of testimony as the single principle sufficient to generate all justification. If others speak the truth and we are justified in believing what they tell us because they do, then this appears to solve all the problems of epistemology. On the other hand, this seems absurd. It appears that either we accept the principle of testimony as a principle that supplants the need for all other epistemological principles or we must reject it and become skeptics about the testimony of others. The solution to this puzzle will shed light on major issues of epistemology.

Let us reflect on Reid's argument more closely. Part of the argument may be reconstructed as follows:

(1) Others are naturally disposed to speak the truth.

(2) The objective of justification is to accept something if and only if it is true.

(3) We are justified in accepting what others tell us.

In ascribing this argument to Reid, I am not proposing that those who are justified in accepting what others tell them are so justified because they appeal to this argument. On the contrary, it was Reid's contention that we are immediately justified, that is, justified without reasoning in accepting what others tell us in the most usual cases of justification. The argument, though it does not generate justification, may, nevertheless, explain why it is that we are immediately justified in accepting the testimony of others.

The problem with the argument is obvious, namely, that the disposition to speak the truth is the disposition to say what one takes or believes to be true. There is no direct connection between what people believe to be true and what is true. Thus, the suppressed assumption of the argument is A. What people take to be true or believe to be true is true or is a trustworthy guide to truth.

Once the assumption is made explicit, it is clear that it is doubtful. The reason that it is doubtful is the key to understanding the role of testimony in the transmission of knowledge by means of testimony. The reason the assumption (A) is doubtful is that people are sometimes

trustworthy and sometimes not. Some people are trustworthy and some people are not. Some people are trustworthy about some matters in some circumstances and not about others in other circumstances.

This shows that when a person is justified in accepting what another person says, one is assuming that the other is trustworthy. I do not suggest that one has reflected on the trustworthiness of another when one assumes that the other is trustworthy. One can assume that another is trustworthy without reflecting on the matter. We learn over time when others are trustworthy and when they are not, though such information remains incomplete and inconclusive. It is, therefore, obvious that the original argument must be amended to include the assumption that person speaking is trustworthy in the circumstances on the subject whereof she speaks.

Even with the argument amended to include the assumption that the speaker is trustworthy on the subject in the circumstances, one may doubt that the limpid-eared listener is really justified in accepting what she is told. For, she may assume that the speaker is trustworthy in ways that he is not. She may assume that he knows whereof he speaks when, in fact, he is a loquacious knowing nothing. Is the person justified in accepting what she is told when her information indicates that the speaker is trustworthy though she is misinformed? There is a sense in which she is justified. She is personally or subjectively justified on the basis of what she has previously accepted, what I have elsewhere called her acceptance system.[2] In another sense, however, she is not justified, for her personal justification is defeated by the facts of the matter. So she is not objectively justified. A person can be subjectively justified but not objectively justified when her subjective justification is defeated. I have defined the notions of subjective justification and undefeated justification elsewhere.[3] An intuitive understanding of these notions will suffice for our purposes.

On the basis of these distinctions we can articulate an adequate account of the justification obtained from testimony. Let us consider, first of all, the causal or transmission theory of justification. According to this theory, if a person x knows that p and tells another person that p who accepts what she is told, who in turn tells another person who accepts what she is told, and so forth until person y is told that p and accepts what she is told, then person y is justified in accepting that p and knows that p. This theory is very appealing, but it is incorrect. If person y accepts what she is told in spite of information to the effect that the speaker

who tells her is untrustworthy, then person y is not even subjectively justified in accepting what she is told. Moreover, even if the person incorrectly assumes that the speaker is untrustworthy when he is perfectly trustworthy, she is not subjectively justified in accepting what the speaker has told her.

It is, in fact, essential that the listener accept that the speaker is trustworthy for her to be subjectively justified in accepting what she is told. One might be inclined to think that a person is justified in accepting what she is told by a speaker even though she has no opinion about the trustworthiness of a speaker, especially if he speaks the truth and knows he does. As a result, the listener might innocently acquire knowledge transmitted by the speaker. It is easy enough to see that this is incorrect. Gullibility does not suffice for justified acceptance or the acquisition of knowledge. If I have no idea whether a speaker is trustworthy or not, I am not justified in accepting what the speaker says nor do I know that what the speaker says is true.

Suppose Holly has told me that Jim takes great pride in knowing where his mentor, Alvin Goldman is, and, as a result tells the truth about where Alvin is when he, Jim, knows where Alvin is but, unfortunately, also acts like he knows where Alvin is when he does not. Imagine that I am unsure about whether to accept what Holly has told me about Jim, about Jim's being untrustworthy. Jim seems like a more responsible sort to me, but what Holly has told me leaves me in doubt as to whether Jim is trustworthy in what he says about where Alvin is because Holly surely seems responsible. I now have no idea whether Jim is trustworthy when he says where Alvin is. If Jim now tells me that Alvin is in room 213, I have no idea whether he is trustworthy or not. I am, as a result, not automatically justified in accepting what Jim says. If I have no idea whether my informant is trustworthy, my gullible acceptance of what he says does not render me justified in accepting what he says or give me knowledge that Alvin Goldman is in room 213. This is the case even if Holly is the untrustworthy one and Jim is trustworthy concerning the whereabouts of Alvin Goldman and knows that Alvin Goldman is in room 213.

I would know that Alvin Goldman was in room 213 as a result of accepting what I was told only if I had known that the information I had received were trustworthy. I would be subjectively justified in accepting that Alvin Goldman was in room 213 as a result of accepting

what I was told only if, contrary to fact, I had been subjectively justified in accepting that the information that I had received was trustworthy. If I had had a subjective justification for accepting that Alvin was in room 213, it would have been defeated if Jim's testimony is untrustworthy.

Another way of understanding the force of the preceding argument is to imagine a being who automatically accepts whatever he is told and cannot resist acceptance. Moreover, let us suppose that the person has no conception of the distinction between truth and error, between information and misinformation, between trustworthiness and untrustworthiness. Is such a person justified in accepting what he is told? The person is morally justified in accepting what he is told. We cannot say that it is in any way wrong for the person to accept what he cannot help but accept. Still, the person is not justified in the sense required for knowledge because the person is not justified in accepting that what he is told is true, or correct information, or even that the speaker or what he says is trustworthy. That is why he does not know that what he gullibly accepts is true. A person may, in short, receive and transmit information, just as a machine may do this, without knowing that what he receives and transmits is true, and, indeed, without understanding what he receives and transmits. A person with the intelligence of an idiot may receive and transmit the information that the fourth quark has been discovered without understanding or knowing that this is the case.

The crux of the preceding argument is that whether the receiver of information is subjectively justified in accepting the testimony of the speaker will depend on what the person accepts about the speaker, and whether the justification of the receiver is objective and undefeated will depend on whether the receiver is correct in the relevant things she accepts about the speaker. If she accepts that the speaker is trustworthy and accepting this coheres with the rest of what she accepts, then she is subjectively justified. If, moreover, this justification is undefeated as well, then she will turn out to have knowledge, for, as I have argued elsewhere, undefeated justification is knowledge.[4]

The role of coherence in knowledge obtained from testimony may be explicated by considering skeptical objections to the testimony. For example, a skeptic might object that the testimony is not trustworthy. For the person to be subjectively justified in accepting the testimony of the speaker, it must be more reasonable for her to accept that the testimony is trustworthy than that it is not, at least in terms of what she accepts.

For the justification to be undefeated, it must turn out that no correction of error in what the receiver accepts would make it more reasonable for her to accept that the speaker is not trustworthy than that he is trustworthy. Coherence is thus defined in terms of how reasonable it is for a person to accept one thing rather than another on the basis of the background system, which I call the acceptance system of the person and in terms of undefeated justification from coherence on the basis of systems resulting from corrections of errors in the background system.[5]

We can now solve the problem with which we began. We need not affirm that testimony always yields justified acceptance in order to account for the way in which testimony yields justification. Instead, we may suppose that for testimony to yield justification, even subjective justification, a person must accept that the speaker is trustworthy in the circumstances with respect to the subject whereof he speaks. In order for the justification to be underfeated thus yielding knowledge, the listener must be correct in accepting that the speaker is trustworthy in the relevant respect.

Thus, the role of testimony, however important and ubiquitous, is no more fundamental than other sources of information. We must evaluate the trustworthiness of the sources of our information, whether our senses, memory or the testimony of others, to obtain justification, and we must be correct in these evaluations to obtain knowledge. The evaluation may be the result of habit or reflection. What is important for justification is that it yield the acceptance of the trustworthiness of our source of information. No source takes precedence over the others. Instead each provides us with information for evaluating the others. Each may be confirmed or disconfirmed by the others which it confirms or disconfirms. Justification is the result of coherence. It is the combination of coherence and freedom from error that yield subjective and undefeated justification. It is the way in which such information fits together that determines whether we are justified in accepting the results of some source of information.

Some questions arise. Do we really accept that our sources of information are trustworthy? What does such acceptance amount to? The answer to the second question is that acceptance is a state that has a functional role in thought, inference and action. It may be reflective or unreflective. We do accept that our sources of information are trustworthy. Our acceptance is exhibited, first of all, by the fact that we trust them.

Moreover, we then proceed to think further and draw inferences trusting to the truth of what we accept. We exhibit our acceptance of the trustworthiness of others by trusting them and what they say in our thoughts and actions.

Another question concerns the possibility of a foundational account of the justification of accepting testimony. Can the acceptance of testimony be justified entirely on basis of evidence gleaned from perception? It is tempting to think so, but brief reflection removes the temptation. From perception, I know what the world is like, but I do not know what another accepts, means or intends. I see a tree. Another says, "I see a tree." I naturally trust her, but can this trust be entirely based on induction from what I perceive? I perceive the tree and her words, but I do not perceive her beliefs, her interpretation of her words, nor her intentions. It is consistent with what I perceive that she believes that she is hallucinating a tree and that is what her words mean. It is consistent with what I perceive that she believes that she does not see a tree but wishes to deceive me about what she sees and says what she does with the intention to deceive me. What goes on in her is the unperceived link in the chain of transmission of evidence.

If I start by accepting that she is a trustworthy source of information who forms beliefs as I do and means what I do by her words, I may become subjectively justified in accepting that she sees a tree as a result. If, on the other hand, I attempt to establish her trustworthiness on the basis of perception, I shall be left stranded in the desert of conflicting hypotheses. Any evidence I receive from perception will be compatible with the hypothesis that she dissembles or does not mean what I mean by what she says. We must begin be accepting that others are trustworthy and qualify our views concerning their trustworthiness on the basis of perception. Acceptance of the trustworthiness of the testimony of others, like acceptance of the trustworthiness of our own senses, yields subjective justification. If we are correct about these matters, the justification remains undefeated and converts to knowledge.

Testimony remains a fundamental source of information. Rather than one source of information constituting the basis of all justification and knowledge, our evaluation of the trustworthiness of the sources and, most crucially, of ourselves as evaluators of trustworthiness drives the engine of justification. It is not the chain of transmission that produces justifi-

cation but our evaluation of the chain and our trustworthiness in this enterprise. Testimony stands as equal to perception in a coherent circle of acceptance and knowledge.

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NOTES

[1] For an account of Reid's views on testimony, see Keith Lehrer and John C. Smith, "Reid on Testimony and Perception," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Issue, 1985, and Keith Lehrer, *Thomas Reid*, Routledge, 1989, pp. 73–74.

[2] See, Keith Lehrer, "Knowledge Reconsidered," in *Knowledge and Skepticism*, edited by Marjorie Clay and Keith Lehrer, Westview Press, 1989, pp. 131–154, esp. 134–137 and Keith Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge*, Westview Press, 1990, pp. 112–129.

[3] In "Knowledge Reconsidered," pp. 137–141, 146–152.

[4] In "Knowledge Reconsidered," pp. 146–152.

[5] See, *Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 122–151.

ERNEST SOSA

TESTIMONY AND COHERENCE

Testimony is important both practically and intellectually. We rely on it for our grasp of history, geography, science, and more. We stake our time and fortune, and even our lives, on our beliefs. Which plane to board, what to eat or drink, the instrument readings to accept – all decided through testimony.

If we are largely justified in accepting testimony, how so? We might appeal to a principle like this

T Testimony is correct more often that not.

But how to justify acceptance of T? There is so much testimony, past present, and future! There are so many cultures, and cultures so diverse! How could one be sure about anything so strong as T?

Perhaps nothing so strong as T is needed: maybe it's enough to accept:

T′ From the sort of people I have dealt with in the sort of circumstances now present, testimony is normally correct.

Some have despaired of justifying any general claim about the correctness of testimony. H. H. Price for example prefers to postulate a *policy* of accepting testimony, in sharp contrast with any substantive belief in the likes of T or T′. Since policies need justification, moreover, for his testimonial policy Price offers the pragmatic justification that if we did not adopt it we would forfeit the rich supply of knowledge brought by testimony.[1] Try to suspend judgment on everything based on testimony, and see how much supposed knowledge you must then relinquish.

Such a pragmatic defense of testimony is dubious, however, since the whole question before us is whether testimony provides knowledge and if so how. To argue that it does so through our policy of accepting it, a policy justified in turn through its alleged yield of knowledge, is unacceptably circular.

Let us look more closely into the requirements for knowledge by testimony. According to Keith Lehrer, for one to be completely justi-

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 59–67.

fied in believing that p it is required not only (a) that this belief cohere with one's acceptance system of beliefs, including probability assignments, but also (b) that it would also cohere with one's acceptance system purged of all falsehood. And we are offered the following general restriction on testimony, the Justification Restriction (J):

J Receiving information from another is no source of our own justification unless we attribute complete justification to the informant.

Lehrer provides an example along with some general comments:

[W]hen Ms. Oblate tells me that the sun is not round, then I must evaluate this information. I must evaluate whether Ms. Oblate is trustworthy in what she thus conveys. As a result, I am completely justified in believing that the sun is not round only if I am completely justified in accepting that Ms. Oblate is trustworthy in what she conveyed. The latter is true only if Ms. Oblate is completely justified in accepting that the sun is not round. The knowledge we acquire by the transfer of information from others is, therefore, intrinsically dependent on the others being completely justified in accepting what they convey.[2]

James Ross, in his detailed treatment of the subject, places an even strong requirement on testimony, summarized in part as follows:

S comes to know that h on W's testimony iff: W knows that h, tells S, and his telling S brings it about that S believes that h and h is evident for S.[3]

Nevertheless, even J may be stronger than it should be. Lehrer has also written that " . . . a child, like a recording device, may receive and convey knowledge, but also, like the recording device lacks the understanding to have knowledge."[4] I agree with Lehrer's later insight. It seems unnecessary to require complete justification on the part of the informant. The informant can be trustworthy in the way a child or a recording device can be trustworthy, which suffices to make the informant a possible source of our own justification. Indeed one can even imagine circumstances in which the testifier is very unreliable and yet one arrives at knowledge through essential reliance on his testimony. And it is possible to generalize even further, as does Leibniz. "Rhetoricians," writes he, "distinguish two kinds of arguments: 'artful' ones which are developed from things by means of reasoning, and 'artless' ones which simply rest on the explicit testimony either of some man or even, perhaps,

of the thing itself. But there are also 'mixed' ones, *since testimony can itself provide a fact which serves in the construction of an 'artful' argument*."[5] Here are some examples:

(a) T testifies that *p*, S perceives that T testifies that *p*, and S knows thereby that someone testifies that *p*.

(b) T testifies that n times now has someone testified in place P, with no idea that hers is the nth such testimony or even that she is at place P. S witnesses the testimony and knows (i) that there had been n–1 earlier instances of testimony at place P, and (ii) that this testimony of T's is at place P and unaccompanied by any other present testimony at P.

In both cases S can come to know that *p* through essential reliance on T's testimony that *p*, but in neither case need T know that *p*, or be completely justified in believing that *p*, or even so much as be at all reliable on questions such as the question whether *p*.

Consider however the claim that one's informant is not only (i) reliable (like a child or recording device) but also (ii) completely justified. There are of course circumstances in which this claim may add a *further* measure of coherence to our belief system, and it may thus serve to make our acceptance of the information even better justified. But such a claim seems unnecessary for us to be completely justified in accepting the information. For we can be justified in accepting the information as when we accept information from a child, or when we accept testimony which we know to be self-verifying in the circumstances even if the testifier is wholly ignorant of this.

If we need not obey the Justification Restriction J, that makes it easier to acquire knowledge through testimony, but we still lack any very good explanation of how it might be done. Recall for instance our modest principle of testimony:

T′ From the sort of people I have dealt with in the sort of circumstances now present, testimony is normally correct.

What could possibly serve as our basis for believing a general claim such as T′? Call the sort of testimony referred to in T′ "preferred testimony." How could we justify our acceptance of preferred testimony? Might we rely on an appeal to induction through perception and memory? Perhaps

we have noted through perception many instances of the accuracy of preferred testimony and have retained through memory a running record of such success, all of which now serves as an inductive basis for our continuing acceptance of preferred testimony, which is thereby justified. Maybe so, but questions arise:

Q1 What is testimony? What are the conditions required for S to testify that *p*?

Q2 Related to Q1, how can S′ tell that S is testifying or has testified that *p*?

Q3 Does one normally through perception and memory gather a large and diverse enough basis for an inductive inference to the conclusion that preferred testimony is generally correct?

Q4 What sort of correlation would one need between preferred testimony and correctness for that correlation to serve as a good basis for the inductive inference of Q3 above? Would one need to postulate some sort of causal connection between the testimony and its correctness?

It may help to step back and compare testimony with easily and widely recognized faculties, such as perception, introspection, memory and reason. Memory, for example, turns out to resemble testimony rather closely.

Retentive memory is a psychological mechanism that conveys beliefs across stages of a life. Testimony is a social mechanism that conveys beliefs across lives at a time. In a well ordered mind memory will tend to be selective, and a function of attention and interest. If we remembered every detail, our minds would be swamped with clutter. In a well ordered society testimony must be selective. If everyone reported everything to their neighbors, the lines of communication would be clogged, and our heads full of a useless jumble.

Memory is of course not the only psychological mechanism relevant to epistemology. Perception and reason are often cited as well, with two varieties of perception – the inner and the outer; and two varieties of reason – the intuitive and the inferential. These three broad categories – memory, perception, and reason – are said to be fundamental, and none reducible to the others in epistemic value. Even the coherentist will need to appeal to all three in explaining the full variety of what we take ourselves to know, and the appeal will need to be fundamental

since perception won't be fully justifiable except by circular reasoning going back to perception again. If we wipe our tabula clean of all perceptual inscriptions we shall never be able to legitimate their reinscription on the basis of any linear appeal to memory and reason alone. And similar reasoning would apply to each of these in turn. All three seem needed and none certifiable by unaided appeal to the others. What about testimony?

Returning to our four questions, let's say that one "testifies" that *p* if and only if one states one's belief that *p*. This is a broad sense of testimony that counts posthumous publications as examples. More commonly testimony requires an object to whom it is directed, as in a court of law. Thus for Ross testimony is " . . . any verbalized reporting of a purported state of affairs where the reporter intends that the hearer (reader, viewer, etc.) will take it on his report that the state of affairs is *as* reported."[6] But here we opt for a broader notion of testimony which requires only that it be a statement of someone's thoughts or beliefs, which they might direct to the world at large and to no-one in particular. That will have to do for now in answer to our first question. As for the second question, it raises a difficult and complex problem in the epistemology of other minds, which I mention only to put it aside. Thus we come to our two questions most properly on the epistemology of testimony, Q3 and Q4.

Hume offers a response to our questions as follows:

> [T]here is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators. . . . This species of reasoning, perhaps, one may deny to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. I shall not dispute about a word. It will be sufficient to observe that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. It being a general maxim, that no objects have any discoverable connexion together, and that all the inferences which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction; it is evident that we ought not to make an exception to this maxim in favour of human testimony, whose connexion with any event seems, in itself, as little necessary as any other. . . .[7]

And shortly thereafter he adds:

> The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any *connexion*, which we perceive *a priori*, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them.[8]

We are "accustomed," says Hume, "to find a conformity" between testimony and reality. And just how do we manage that? Can we have tested a large and varied enough sample of testimony? And are the deliverances of testimony regularly enough the sorts of things that we can and do check by means other than testimony? Of course much testimony we can and do check perceptually in a normal day. "Coffee," reads the can. We open it, and smell the coffee. We drive to work and know the intentions of fellow motorists by their signals, verified perceptually. And so for the rest of the day. But most testimony is uncheckable by perceptual means, if only through lack of time and resources. Most of what I take myself to know about history, geography, and science, for example, is in one way or another perceptually inaccessible to me.

There is moreover the phenomenon of team research in contemporary science. A recent experiment in particle physics required 50 scientist/years to prepare and 50 scientist/years for data collection, which was just the beginning. Analysis and interpretation of the results then required even more time and effort on the part of even more people. The resulting publication in the *Physical Review Letters* was 3 1/2 pages long, with a list of 99 authors.[9] Granted, this is a somewhat unusual case, but it is not unusual for such articles to list more than ten authors, and occasionally as many as forty.

That suggests a pattern of cooperation whereby no one participant knows all the supporting data or reasoning. Instead, each specialist's contribution must be taken on trust by others. Only all the contributions put together yield the overall conclusions, but no one scientist has direct knowledge of the entire basis. Rather, each scientist works largely on testimony.

Hume seems insensitive to the true nature of our predicament. On this question at least, Thomas Reid is more perceptive:

> The wise and beneficent Author of Nature, who intended that we should be social creatures, and that we should receive the greatest and most important part of our knowledge by the information of others, hath, for these purposes, implanted in our natures two principles that tally with each other.
>
> The first of these principles is, a propensity to speak truth, and to use the signs of language so as to convey our real sentiments. . . . Another original principle implanted in us by the Supreme Being, is a disposition to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us. This is the counterpart to the former; and, as that may be

called *the principle of veracity*, we shall, for want of a more proper name, call this *the principle of credulity*. . . .

It is evident that, in the matter of testimony, the balance for human judgment is by nature inclined to the side of belief; and turns to that side of itself, when there is nothing put into the opposite scale. If it was not so, no proposition that is uttered in discourse would be believed, until it was examined and tried by reason; and most men would be unable to find reasons for believing the thousandth part of what is told them.[10]

If Reid is right, testimony is strikingly similar to memory. In each case causal mechanisms operate in us to convey beliefs from source to recipient: from one's own past to one's present, or from one's neighbor to oneself. Through experience one gradually learns to override these mechanisms in special circumstances, but normally they operate without impediment.

However, Reid does not in that passage address the question of how to justify acquiescing in the operation of his divine principles of testimony. Have we any rational defence against a skeptical challenge to them? Clearly much testimony can be tested only by appeal to other testimony. But is this not to test one copy of a newspaper by appeal to other copies? That caricature has a point, since our whole question is how to justify accepting *any* testimony. Is it not therefore a vicious circle to invoke any testimony at all in pursuit of that objective?

We are told that our knowledge can derive from memory, perception, and testimony. Each of these might be justified by appeal to the others, but none can be justified fully without such appeal. One thing seems clear. To support reflective knowledge, one's raft of theory needs central planks detailing one's ways to know. What persuades me of this is mostly an argument about the I/now point of origin for much of one's perceptual system. A vast framework of beliefs is organized around such an origin, and many other nodes of our system depend logically on it in one way or another.

Consider now a systematic replacement of one's "I" and "now" concepts by some other person and time concept pair: N and t. The replacement would look in part like this:

TABLE I
Conceptual origin transformation

I/now System	*N/t System*
I am standing now	N is standing at t
I am speaking now	N is speaking at t
I flew from Providence to Cleveland yesterday.	N flew from Providence to Cleveland a day before t.
I now remember a JFK speech	N at t remembers a JFK speech
AND SO ON . . .	

Remarkably, the conceptual origin transform centered on N/t is bound to be about as coherent and comprehensive as the I/now system, so long as we restrict ourselves to object level beliefs such as those listed. Indeed even an I/now system much more coherent and comprehensive than our own would still suffer the same fate. It would still have a conceptual origin transform centered on N/t with the following two features: (a) being about as coherent and comprehensive as the I/now original, and (b) being *far* from justified for us.

A simple and attractive move will solve our problem: to require that if a system is to yield justification for its member beliefs, it must contain an "epistemic perspective" or a body of "metaknowledge" about one's own faculties and their reliability. There are a number of reasons in its favor, but here I wish to highlight our problem of conceptual origin transformation. How would the requirement of an epistemic perspective make a difference? How would it help?

It would not be enough to require that one's I/now system include an epistemic perspective that details what sorts of beliefs one holds, on what basis, and how reliable is the basis. For that much can be transformed along with the rest, and will all have correlates in the N/t transform. The difference, however, is this. When one holds the original I/now system, one has an account of one's own faculties and of how they serve as reliable sources for what one believes about oneself now. However, when one makes the transformation to the N/t system, and accepts the resulting system, one does so in the absence of such an epistemic perspective for one's newly acquired beliefs.

Compare for example the beliefs on the left side of our table above with their correlates on the right. One knows that one is standing and speaking now, through perception and introspection, and one knows about

one's flight of yesterday, and the speeches of years ago, through memory. But how does one know that N stands or speaks at t, or that N flew a day earlier, or that N remembers such and such? The transformation deprives one of any epistemic perspective permitting an explanation of how one knows these things, and many others like them. It bears emphasis in this connection that N and t could be any person and any time one pleased, long ago or far away.

The requirement of an epistemic perspective seems an indispensable prerequisite for an apt system of beliefs. This epistemic perspective would be constituted by beliefs about one's basic ways of knowing, none of which can be accepted justifiably as a way to know, except by appeal to the others as sources unquestioned for the sake of support in favor of the one. In this sense testimony seems as basic a source of knowledge as the traditional perception, memory, introspection, and inference.[11]

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NOTES

[1] Cf. H. H. Price, *Belief*, New York: Humanities Press, 1969, pp. 111–112.
[2] "Personal and Social Knowledge," *Synthese* 73(1987): 87–107; 96–97.
[3] "Testimonial Evidence," in *Analysis and Metaphysics: Essays in Honor of R.M. Chisholm*, ed. Keith Lehrer, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1975 p. 53. I focus here on a disagreement, but there is much to agree with in both Lehrer's and Ross's accounts, and I have learned from them both.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.
[5] *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. by P. Remnant and J. Bennett, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981, Bk. IV, Ch. xv, sec. 4; my emphasis.
[6] Op. cit., p. 36.
[7] David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Charles W. Hendel, Indianapolis: The Library of Liberal Arts Press, 1955, p. 119.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 120–1.
[9] For a discussion of this case, see pp. 346–8 of John Hardwig, "Epistemic Dependence," *Journal of Philosophy* LXXXII (1985): 335–350.
[10] Thomas Reid, *Inquiry and Essays*, ed. R.E. Beanblossom and K. Lehrer, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983, pp. 93–95.
[11] This paper grew out of a symposium with Keith Lehrer at the 1988 Oberlin Colloquium. Lehrer's paper, "Social Knowledge," was a helpful stimulus, as was the ensuing discussion.

S. BHATTACHARYYA

EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY AND AUTHORITY: SOME INDIAN THEMES AND THEORIES

I. INTRODUCTION

That by far the greater part of the enormous mass of one's belief and knowledge is acquired from what others tell is regarded by many philosophers as an obvious truth. A main epistemological problem, then, is to explain how one can acquire second-hand knowledge from others. To put the problem in this way, however, is to make many kinds of assumptions – metaphysical, epistemological, psychological. For example, subjective idealists who do not admit the existence of others,[1] or those who find the claim that others have minds totally unjustified, cannot formulate this problem at all. There are many other metaphysical assumptions behind this formulation of the problem about the nature of what one can possibly say or hear. The nature of the problem and its solution depend also upon the conception of knowledge, the nature of testimony, and other epistemological notions, such as competence of the speaker, trust of the hearer etc. Then there are psychological assumptions for explaining why the speaker should speak the truth. The motive might be to help the hearer to obtain knowledge out of compassion, and so on.

Language *almost* everywhere has two forms – spoken and written. These two forms give rise to different problems, although both involve two roles – speaker-hearer and author-reader. I shall now discuss problems of spoken language in which the two roles are to be played by two different parties. Soliloquy in which the speaker himself is the only hearer is parasitic on the usual speaker-hearer case. In every case of speaking the speaker if not deaf also listens to his own voice, but is not, for that reason one of his hearers. The speaker does not know what he says by hearing it, although he may correct what he says by hearing, or otherwise attending to, it.[2]

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 69–97.

II. WHAT CAN ONE POSSIBLY HEAR?

Here 'hear' is used in the sense of auditory perception, not in the sense of sensation. This question is philosophical, not empirical, and cannot be decided by empirical investigation. Different philosophers have given different answers to this question which are really different philosophical theories. The first answer is an extreme position according to which the hearer hears not merely the spoken sentence but the speech act itself. This is the theory of Mcdowell,[3] Elizabeth Fricker[4] and others. A moderate answer is that the hearer hears "utterances as assertions – as expressions of propositions". "If a committed assertion is perceived then two features must be perceived: that the utterance is an assertion and that the speaker puts forward what he asserts as being true . . . unless both features are perceived, it will be wrong to say *tout court* that committed assertions are objects of perception,"[5] Cooper therefore admits that a hearer may perceive assertions but not necessarily as committed assertions. A third extreme theory is that a hearer cannot really perceive even a whole sentence or even a compound word. This theory answers a second question 'What is the relation between speaking and what is being spoken of?' in one way. The point is that there is an ontological distinction between seeing and what is seen, between thinking and what is thought. No one can see his seeing, or think his thinking. The question here is: 'Can we make an analogous ontological distinction between speaking and what is being spoken of?' The present theory denies the possibility of any such distinction – there is no spoken sentence without someone speaking. Then it is pointed out that no one can speak a whole sentence, or even a word of more than one syllable. Speaking proceeds syllable by syllable; when the first syllable is uttered the second syllable is not yet uttered and therefore cannot be an object of perception. When the second syllable is uttered the first syllable is no longer there and, therefore, when the second syllable is perceived the first syllable cannot be perceived at that time. Armstrong has thus argued in a different context. He holds that reports of our current mental states cannot be logically incorrigible. "Suppose I report 'I am in pain now' . . . to what part of time does the word 'now' refer?. . . . The time in question must . . . be the time during which the report is being made. Then it must be remembered that anything we say takes time to say. Suppose, then, I am at the beginning of my report. My indubitable knowledge that I am in pain can surely embrace only the *current instant*: it cannot be

logically indubitable that I will be in pain by the time the sentence is finished. Suppose, again, that I am just finishing my sentence. Can I do better than *remember* what my state was when I began my sentence?"[6] Now this argument of Armstrong can be used in the present case also. If a sentence takes time to get said the hearer when he hears the last syllable can 'no better than remember' what was said before. If a hearer for some reason or other fails to remember what he heard before he requests the speaker to repeat, not because he did not hear the speaker clearly at the first instance. A fairly long sentence, as in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, cannot be said even in 'specious present' and hence cannot be heard by a hearer in specious present. Even in the case of a word of many syllables one cannot speak the whole word at one breath. So the hearer also cannot hear very long compound words, say, in German, or in the technical language of Navya-Nyāya. For example, '*Gesundheitwiederherstellungsmittelzusammenmischungverhältniss-kundiger*', in German, or, '*ghatatvâ-'vacchinna, – saṁyoga-sambandhâ-'vacchinna-prakāratā-nirupita-bhūtalatvâ-'vacchinna-viśeṣyatā-śāli-jñānam*', in Navya-Nyāya language.[7] No one except an expert in Navya-Nyāya technical language will be able to remember all the earlier syllables when he hears the last syllable. Thus even a sentence or a word of more than one syllable cannot be perceived as a whole.

Navya-Nyāya philosophers who accept the theory that syllables can be uttered only one after another, however, explain the universal awareness that we hear a sentence or a long word by defining 'perception' causally. Perception is cognition in which sense-organs play the essential causal role (function as instruments of the cognition). In perception, many other factors like memory of various objects may be causally necessary, but they are not *instruments* of perception, they do not play the essential causal role. We say we see with our eyes but never with our memory. When we hear the last syllable of a word spoken, we remember the syllables in their proper order, as heard earlier, and the last perception along with the memory of earlier syllables together produce the perception of the whole word. This is because when the last syllable is uttered the auditory sense-organ plays the essential role, and aided by the recollection of earlier syllables, a perception of the whole word is produced. This Navya-Nyāya theory is very different from the usual psychological theory that perception is presentative-representative. For example, when we perceive a jar as a jar, memory of earlier perception of *the same object* plays a causal role. But in the case of perception of

a word or a sentence, the last syllable is presented, and what is recollected is not the same syllable, but *other* syllables heard before. If we know the word a moment later, then even the last syllable is not present then and the whole word is only remembered, and our knowledge of the word is memory. It is only when the last syllable is presented, that we can have perception of the whole word or the whole sentence, which can, then, be remembered later.

There are philosophers who distinguish between the act of speaking and a spoken word or sentence. They point out various difficulties in the Navya-Nyāya theory of perception of a whole word or sentence. If the last syllable presented together with impressions of the earlier syllables can cause perception (hearing) of the whole word or sentence, then even if the syllables are uttered with long temporal gaps in between, the perception of the last syllable together with the impressions of the earlier ones ought to cause perception of the whole word or sentence. But no one accepts this as a cause of the perception of the whole expression. The case is not different even if the syllables are uttered in quick succession. Secondly, "if the sounds are remembered in the same order in which they are uttered, how could they be simultaneously grasped?"[8] Hence grammarians like Bhartṛhari do not accept the theory that speaking is ontologically identical with what is being spoken. A spoken word or a sentence, according to this theory, is a type of reality different from speaking.

The theory that words are ontologically different from noises which can be uttered by a speaker involves difficulties of all sorts. One difficulty is how to explain whether a speaker speaking words and sentences performs two acts – producing sounds and speaking words. Then there is also the difficulty from the hearer's point of view. Does a hearer hear two things – sounds and words? The following three different answers apart from their own difficulties are inadequate chiefly because they fail to explain what the speaker does in speaking. (a) One answer is that sounds are heard as identical with words. There are no two objects which are heard when one hears words or sentences. But this answer does not explain how noises and words can be ontologically different and yet the hearer can hear them (correctly?) as identical. (b) The second answer is that sounds are imperceptible and only words can be heard. What is necessary and sufficient to explain the perception of words and sentences is that there be sounds, not that the sounds *be perceived*. A difficulty of this theory is that a deaf person who can

not hear sounds should be able to perceive spoken words, if objectively there are appropriate sounds. (c) Words are manifestors of objects, and so different from mere sounds. When one hears the manifestors one also hears the sounds as fused with the manifestors. That is why a hearer does not hear two things, sounds and words. But when one does not clearly hear the words because they are, say, spoken at a distance, one hears only the sounds. Quine cites many examples of 'listening to a lecturer with an odd accent or unusual diction'. 'Accents may bewilder, and they can *cause* misapprehension without bewilderment'.[9] A difficulty of this theory is that it has to postulate two different causal relations – one for perception of words as fused with sounds, and another when they are not so fused.[10] When we hear sounds we cannot hear the words, for perception of sounds pervents perception of words. Yet when we perceive words we also perceive sounds as identical with the words. But then the question is: if noises and words are ontologically different, words can at best be confused with, not fused with, sounds. So the problem of reality of words confused with the ephemeral sounds producing correct perception of words remains.

A question which arises in this theory is about the ontological status of the word. One theory mentioned by Bhartṛhari is that the word is the class and the sounds are its members. The class is revealed by the various individual instance. Dr. Kunjunni Raja has suggested that this theory is analogous to a theory which Russell held once. 'The spoken word "dog" is not a single entity: it is a class of similar movements of the tongue, throat and larynx. Just as jumping is one class of bodily movements, and walking another, so the uttered word "dog" is a third class of bodily movements. The word "dog" is a universal, just as *dog* is a universal'.[11] Whether to regard the sounds as word tokens and the universals as word types is merely a terminological matter. The difficulty of this theory is how to explain any relation of the universal word-type with its instances. If the word type is regarded simply as the class of word tokens the problem will be to explain the ontological status of this class.

We now explain Bhartṛhari's theory which in our opinion is the best solution of the problem on the relation between sounds and words if they are regarded as ontologically different. This is the *sphoṭa* theory of Bhartṛhari. "It maintains that a word or a sentence is to be considered not as a concatination made up of different sound units arranged in a particular order, but mainly as a single meaningful symbol. The word

or the sentence thus considered as a single meaningful symbol is called the *sphoṭa*. The articulated sounds used in linguistic discourse are merely the means by which the symbol is revealed; it is this symbol which is the meaning bearer. It may also be called the word or the sentence considered from the semantic aspect. It is indivisible and has no time order; the articulated sounds with the time order are resorted to only as a means of revealing this symbol".[12]

It is often maintained that a sentence is composed of the words occurring in it. According to Bhartṛhari this is a totally wrong analysis of the cognition of the sentence. When the speaker speaks a sentence, he does not in his mind compose the sentence word by word, but the whole sentence comes all at once. If sometimes a speaker fumbles for the right word while speaking, that only betrays that his thought was at that point vague and amorphous, but not that he was composing the sentence in his mind word by word. So the composition principle of sentence can be applied only to the hearer, if at all. Now according to Bhartṛhari a hearer hears words or syllables in succession and remembers the different words in the order they were spoken. Yet according to Bhartṛhari the hearer grasps the whole sentence all at once, in a flash as it were. The case is the same with understanding the meaning of the sentence. The meanings of the successive words remembered by the hearer are not by themselves the meaning of the whole sentence which has got to be 'composed' out of them. The point that Bhartṛhari is making is that neither the sentence as a meaning bearer nor the cognition of the meaning is a composite entity. "Even though each letter causes a vague cognition of the indivisible *sphoṭa* the letter also figures in the cognition. It is the cognition of the whole that is significant and therefore important. The whole taken as an integral symbol is something different from the parts that constitute it, and the parts may be considered as irrelevant and illusory. It is not the existence of the cognition of the parts that is denied for we do undoubtedly cognise the individual letters; it is their significance that is in question. The *sphoṭa* is the object of cognition; but it is in the form of the letters that the cognition takes place. This is an instance of a series of errors leading finally to the truth".[13]

"The *sphoṭa* – the word or the sentence located in the minds of the speaker and the listener and taken as an integral symbol – is revealed by the sounds produced in a fixed order. The sounds are only the manifesting agencies and have no function other than that of revealing

the symbol. Each sound helps in manifesting the *sphoṭa*, the first one vaguely, the next one more clearly and so on, until the last one, aided by the impression of the preceeding perception reveals it clearly and more distinctly. It is one and the same *sphoṭa* that is revealed by each one of these letters".[14]

The difference between this theory and the Navya-Nyāya theory explained earlier is fundamental. Navya-Nyāya philosophers argue that the word or the sentence is perceived as being not ontologically different from the sounds. But Bhartṛhari's theory postulates a word or a sentence as a semantical unit different from the sounds. "Bhartṛhari's analysis envisages three aspects of the language situation: (1) The *vaikṛta-dhvani*, the individual instance of the utterance in purely phonetic terms. It is the actual sounds spoken by the speaker and heard by the listener. It includes all the various differences in intonation, tempo, pitch, etc., depending on the individual speakers. (2) The *prākṛta-dhvani*, the phonological structure, the sound pattern of the norm; or, from another point of view, the name of the class of which the various instances are members. This is indicated by the *vaikṛta-dhvani*. All the non-linguistic personal variations are eliminated at this stage. Both the speaker and the listener are conscious of the normal phonological pattern alone. The time-sequence is still present in this. . . . (3) The *sphoṭa*, the internal linguistic symbol which is the unit of meaning, but which cannot be pronounced or written. This is manifested by the *prākṛta-dhvani*".[15]

Thus according to this theory the sentence as the unit of meaning is in the mind of the speaker and the hearer and only manifested by words uttered in succession. The comprehension of the meaning of the sentence is also an unanalysable simple comprehension.

Thus there are two types of theories of the ontological relation between sounds produced by the speaker and the words and sentences spoken and heard. The Navya-Nyāya theory identifies the sounds with the words and yet explains the perception of the word or the sentence as a whole on the basis of the impressions of the ephemeral sounds. Bhartṛhari's theory makes a radical ontological distinction between sounds and words which is the distinction between appearance and reality. According to this theory both syntax and semantics concern only the appearances. The unanalysable sentence which is in the mind is also at its deepest level identical with the object. Both speech and object are embedded in consciousness and are united in it.

III. SPOKEN AND WRITTEN SENTENCES

There is fundamental distinction between speaking and writing. Whether what is spoken endures when speaking is over is debatable; what is written surely survives the act of writing. So all written words exist side by side and it is usual to see (read) a whole written sentence at a glance. Davidson's suggestion that sentences are like macro-objects (tables, chairs etc.), and words are like micro-objects (electrons, protons etc.),[16] seems to be valid only in the case of written sentences. We can hear only syllables after syllables, the spoken sentence does not exist as a whole at any time, like tables and chairs, and cannot be perceived as a whole except in the technical sense of Navya-Nyāya. We see whole expressions and this is why proof-reading is such a specialised job.

Thus although there is no difficulty in explaining how we perceive a written sentence at one glance, still there are difficulties in perceiving it as an assertion. In the case of spoken sentences, we hear not only what is spoken, but also how what is spoken is spoken – the tone, pitch, tempo, etc., (*vaikṛtadhvani* of Bhartṛhari), so it is plausible to hold that the speech act itself is publicly observable as McDowell holds, but this is not possible in the case of written sentences. There are various devices like quotes, corners (Quine), italics, which are available only for written sentences, still all these devices do not suffice to make a speech act observable. In the case of spoken sentences, not merely the tone, the pitch and other features of the sound but also bodily gestures, various features of the face, eyes, etc., are observable. St. Augustine, for example, says:

"When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples; the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires."[17]

But here speaking has been given a very wide sense, for 'bodily movements' are regarded as 'the natural language of all peoples'. Although here Augustine describes a theory of learning the meaning of

words, still it is clear that it is the meaning of sentences that could be learned from grasping the intentions of the speaker in this way.

But the question arises whether grasping the intention of the speaker in this way amounts to perceiving. To be able to say 'not only did I hear him utter "p", I *heard* him assert that p seriously', we have to depend exclusively on what we can *hear*, namely e.g., the sentence uttered and the tone, the pitch etc., in which it is uttered.

I will be interesting to compare and contrast the Nyāya theory of learning meanings of words with Augustine's theory. According to Nyāya philosophers the situation in which a child first learns meanings of words, involves three parties – a senior person, an adult, and a child. The senior person utters an imperative sentence like 'bring the cow' and the adult obeys the command. The child hears the sentence and observes the action of the adult. Then the child hears, say, the following imperative sentences:

(1) Tie the cow.
(2) Bring the horse.
(3) Tie the horse.

and observes the activities of the adult. Then by comparing and contrasting the sentences and cancelling out the different words and attending to the common words, and analysing what is common and what is not in the action of the adult the child learns the meanings of the words 'cow', 'horse', 'bring', 'tie'. Now it is clear that the child has to observe the actions which the adult performs in accordance with the orders given by the senior, and the child can learn the meanings of words only by abstraction from imperative sentences. Thus the Nyāya theory is fundamentally different from Augustine's. On the Nyāya theory a child learns the meanings of words not by observing physical features of the speaker to learn his intention, but by observing the behaviour of a competent hearer acting on a command which, too, the child hears.

David Cooper argues that there is a sense of 'assertion' which does not amount to the hearer believing what is asserted. Irony, metaphor, hyperbole etc., are assertions but are never meant to be believed by the hearer to be true.[18]

Now even if it be admitted that there is a sense of 'assertion' such that all assertions are not meant to be believed to be true by the hearer, it is not proved that a speech act is not publicly observable. I have already pointed out that what the hearer hears is not merely what is spoken but

also how what is spoken is spoken. An irony is obviously an irony, and it is clear from the way the speaker speaks it. It is not merely the tone but various other nuances of the speech which are publicly observable.

There are, however, more complex cases where it is difficult to understand the meaning of a sentence because the intention of the speaker is not clear. It may so happen that the intention of a speaker gets more and more revealed as he goes on speaking. For example, when Mark Antony started speaking:

> 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears,
> I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
> . . . .
> But Brutus says he was ambitious,
> and Brutus is an honourable man.'

all his audience took him literally to assert what he said. But when later on he went on saying, 'I fear, I wrong the honourable men' his hearers understood him as being sarcastic and responded by saying, 'They were traitors. Honourable men!' When the intention of the speaker became manifest now, one could doubt whether the initial statements were also made in good faith or they were mere tactical pronouncements without being serious assertions. It is clear that a speech act need not be an assertion, for what follows may change the initial understanding. This is a case of the future affecting the past, of backward causation.

IV. DEFINITION OF KNOWLEDGE

A main problem of epistemology of authority is to explain how a hearer can acquire second hand knowledge from what others tell him. This problem is formulated in different ways corresponding to different conceptions of knowledge. For example, Fricker who accepts the definition of knowledge as justified true belief analyses the concept of acquiring second hand knowledge as acquiring a true belief which the hearer is justified in holding. Ross, on the other hand, accepts Chisholm's definition of knowledge as true evident belief. So he analyses the problem into (i) the problem of explaining how a proposition becomes evident on hearing it from someone; (ii) the problem of generation of reasonableness on hearing what a speaker says. How exactly the epistemological problem of testimony is to be formulated depends upon the conception of knowledge. It is therefore necessary to examine the Ayer type or

Chisholm type definition which may be grouped together as 'the classical definition of knowledge'. This definition may be generally stated thus:

DK1 $\quad Kxp = \text{Df } Bxp \,\&\, p \,\&\, Exp$

where '*Exp*' is to be given different interpretations to suit different versions of this definition; for example, '*Exp*' may mean '*x* is justified in believing that *p*' or '*p* is evident to *x*; thus Ayer's and Chisholm's definitions are both accommodated. I shall try to show that the differences between knowledge and true belief in expressions with iterated '*K*' cannot be made, *if* we assume (i) the KK-thesis, and (ii) obviously valid rules of inference (with the usual propositional logic as the basis).

The KK-thesis is often stated thus:

(KK) $\quad Kxp \supset KxKxp$

The rules of inference which I assume are

R1 $\quad Kx\,(P \,\&\, Q) \rightarrow Kx(P)$
R2 $\quad Kx\,(P \,\&\, Q) \rightarrow Kx(Q)$.

Then the following theorem is easily proved.

THEOREM 1 $KxKxp \equiv Kx\,(Bxp \,\&\, p)$

Proof.

1.	$KxKxp$	
2.	$Kx\,(Bxp \,\&\, p \,\&\, Exp)$	1, DK1
3.	$Kx\,(Bxp \,\&\, p)$	2, R1
4.	$KxKxp \supset Kx\,(Bxp \,\&\, p)$	1–3, CP
5.	$Kx\,(Bxp \,\&\, p)$	
6.	Kxp	5, R2
7.	$Kxp\ KxKxp$	(KK)
8.	$KxKxp$	6, 7, M, P
9.	$Kx\,(Bxp \,\&\, p) \supset KxKxp$	5–8, CP
10.	$KxKxp \equiv Kx\,(Bxp \,\&\, p)$	4, 9, Conj

If knowledge is something more than mere true belief, then I should be able to know when I have knowledge and when I have mere true belief. Theorem 1 suggests, however, that no one is able to make that discrimination in his own case.

Theorem 1 shows the conditions of x's knowing that x knows that p are exactly the same as the conditions of his knowing that x believes truly that p. Now it may be argued that this is really not a serious charge against DK1.

"That consequence is supposed to be an embarrassment to those who accept the classical definition of knowledge. But I intend to defend the classical definition. First I shall show the limitations of the theorem. It is crucial to the truth of the theorem that the verbs be expressed in the present tense: I know *now* that I know *now* that p, if and only if, I know *now* that I *now* believe truly that p. If we were to mix present and past tenses, the proof of the theorem would fail. You cannot prove this: I know now that I *knew p*, if and only if, I know now that I *believed* truly that p. In order to prove that, you would have to assume the KK-thesis with mixed tenses. The KK-thesis would have to be read thus: If I know now that p, then I know now that I *knew p*. That is more like an assertion of Plato's theory of recollection, which few people would accept.

So nothing in Theorem 1 says that I cannot distinguish cases where I knew that p from cases where I merely *believed truly* that p. I can make the distinction between my *past* cognitive states."[19]

This defence of DK1 however, involves difficulties. It is not clear what sense can be given to 'I *knew* that p'. There is a perfect sense of 'I came to learn that p, but what can be the sense of 'I knew that p (in the past?)'? Moreover Theorem 1 uses all the verbs in the present tense, but it does not follow that the present tense should mean an action going on at the present moment. 'I know that I know that p' does not mean the same thing as 'I know *now* that I know *now* that p', for knowing is not an event occurring in time, now or in the past or future. If, however, Falk's contention that there is a radical difference between 'I know *now* that p' and 'I *knew* that p' is accepted, then it is not clear how we can say that in future 'I can look back on them and detect a difference in retrospect', for then I would merely detect if I could only a difference between 'I knew that p' and 'I believed truly that p', not that between 'I know that p' and 'I believe truly that p'. Thus Theorem 1 shows that justification of true belief need not be the same as knowledge at higher levels.

So there are two alternatives here: either the KK-thesis or the classical definition of knowledge has to be rejected to avoid Theorem 1. Nyāya does *both*, by modifying the KK-thesis, and using 'knowledge' in the sense of true belief. The modified KK-thesis of Nyāya is that every cognition – knowledge, belief, doubt, assumption – *can* be known directly by a higher order act of introspection if one so desires. This introspective knowledge is infallible. Secondly, identifying true belief with knowledge, Nyāya stipulates that in knowing that one knows the subject infers that a true belief, which is as a matter of fact true, is true by acting successfully on it. It is, of course, not necessary to have a true belief to know (infer) that the belief is true.

Now if knowledge be true belief, then the epistemological problem of acquiring second-hand knowledge from others becomes the problem of acquiring true belief from them. It may seem that this epistemological problem becomes very simple, and may be, for that reason, uninteresting; but this is not really so, because there are other types of difficulties of this theory. We shall show that these difficulties are present in epistemological theories of contemporary Western philosophers who, however, have not yet paid any attention to them.

V. A FAMILY OF EPISTEMIC CONCEPTS

There are 3 sub-groups under which we may put the different concepts. (1) There are certain concepts which are not properly defined, such as 'withholding a proposition' (Chisholm). (2) There are concepts which play a crucial role in epistemic theories without being clarified or defined at all, like 'blocking' (Gilbert Hermann), 'prevent' (Ginsberg). (3) These concepts are also used without any attempt to clarify their meaning, like 'evidence defeating force' (Ross). I shall try to explain these concepts following the Navya-Nyāya theory.

(1) Chisholm defines 'withholding *h*' thus: "The expression 'withholding *h*' may be taken to abbreviate 'not believing *h* and not believing not-*h*'".[20] Here we have to distinguish between three cases.

CASE 1. There are innumerable propositions of which innumerable men are totally unaware. They neither believe them nor disbelieve them, but they cannot be said to be 'withholding' them.

CASE 2. There are innumerable subjects of which innumerable men

are totally ignorant. If they are told of a proposition which they do not at all understand, they will neither believe nor disbelieve it; yet it will be odd to say that they are 'withholding' it without having any idea of what they are 'withholding'. For example, if anyone not knowing anything of lattice theory is told, "the *maximum* element of a lattice must be carefully distinguished from a *maximal* element of a lattice"[21] he will be simply puzzled and *can* neither believe nor disbelieve it. It will be odd to say that he is withholding it.

CASE 3. There are propositions which one understands and *considers*, and yet, cannot either believe or disbelieve it. In such a case, it will be proper to say that one is 'withholding' it.

Then we shall have to accept the distinction between the two senses of 'believe' as Ross does, between believe_1 and believe_2, for belief as an actual state has certain logical and causal properties which belief as a disposition does not have. For example, it is often said that no one can hold self-contradictory beliefs. Yet it is clear that the beliefs in this context must be active states and not mere dispositions. When an active belief lapses into a disposition or becomes forgotten it does not have the force to prevent or block the belief in the contradictory. Ginsberg uses the notion of reactive beliefs to explain how a person can hold self-contradictory beliefs. He defines a reactive belief thus: "(*Tm*) If *x* judges that *s*, *x* believes that not-*s* and not-*s* is an unconscious belief, then *x* believes that *s*, and *s* is a reactive belief."

"(*Tn*) If *x* earnestly asserts that *s*, *x* believes that not-*s*, and not-*s* is an unconscious belief, then *x* believes that *s*, and *s* is a reactive belief".[22] As an example of such a case I may mention what Rescher has done in his *Many-Valued Logic*. "This refutes the contention – encountered in various places in the literature – that no two-valued tautology can take on the truth-value *F* in L_3. This erroneous claim was made by A.N. Prior in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ed. by P. Edwards (Vol. 5, p. 3; New York, 1967) and echoed by the present writer in *Topics in Philosophical Logic* (Dordrecht, 1968), p. 66. I am grateful to Professor Prior for drawing the matter to my attention and notifying me of Turquette's finding as communicated in correspondence. For a further consideration of related issues see pp. 66–67 below."[23] Yet on pp. 66ff he writes: "Putting this notation to work, we may observe that we have already shown with regard to L_3, the 3-valued system of Łukasiewicz,

that if we adopt the designations

$+T$
$\pm I$
$-F$

then both:

$T\ (L_3) = T\ (C_2)$
$C\ (L_3) = C\ (C_2)$" (p. 69).

But this is exactly what he has said to be imposible. For example the C_2 tautology $\sim [(p \vee \sim p) \equiv (p \cdot \sim p)]$ takes F if p is given the value I in Łukasiewicz's system. Thus although Rescher explicitly states on p. 27, that it is a mistake to hold that no two-valued tautology can take on the truth-value F in L_3, still on p. 69 he writes '$T\ (L_3) \equiv T\ (C_2)$'. This is possible only on the hypothesis that when Rescher was writing pp. 63ff he totally forgot what he wrote in note 3, on p. 27. This shows that one can hold self-contradictory beliefs if at least one of them is no longer *actively* held. When a belief becomes inactive either because it has lapsed into a disposition or has been forgotten even though not beyond recall on prompting, it will not be able to block or prevent the belief in the contradictory proposition.

(2) We may note here that Gilbert Harman has a concept of blocking an inference. "We might suggest that an inferable conclusion t is essential to an inference only if the assumption that t was false would block the inference."[24] By 'inference' Harman means: "Words like 'reasoning', 'argument', and 'inference' are ambiguous. They may refer to a process of reasoning, argument, or inference, or they may refer to an abstract structure consisting of certain propositions as premises, others as conclusions, perhaps others as intermediate steps. A functional account of reasoning says how a mental or neurophysiological process can *be* a process of reasoning by virtue of the way it functions. That is, a functional account says how the functioning of such a process allows it to be correlated with the reasoning, taken to be an abstract inference, which the process instantiates."[25]

Blocking of an inference can be understood in causal terms. If a factor which Mill calls 'a negative condition' be *present*, then this will prevent

the production of the effect. Ginsberg used a concept of preventing a belief from being manifested in a judgment.[26]

Although Ginsberg avoids claiming a causal explanation of the concept of being an *operant* belief,[27] yet he not merely speaks constantly of 'factors which prevent that belief from being manifested' but also uses a Freudian theory of repression which is a causal theory in explaining the notions of unconscious belief and reactive belief. Blocking may also be generalised to cover all sorts of doubt, belief, knowledge, and other cognitive states. I shall now explain the Navya-Nyāya theory blocking of cognition, i.e., preventing the cognitions from occurring. Navya-Nyāya philosophers use 'cognition' only in the episodic sense, and in a very wide sense to include knowing, believing as well as doubting, etc. So it is necessary to impose conditions on both the preventer act and the prevented act of cognizing contradictory propositions.

Conditions of the preventer cognition (*pratibandhaka jñāna*):

(i) The cognition must be attended with belief; for example, it must not be a supposition or a doubt.

(ii) It may be either true or false; in either cae it must not be cognized, truly or falsely, to be false, or even doubted to be false.

(iii) It must be about the proposition which is contradictory or contrary to the proposition cognized by the prevented cognition.

Conditions of the prevented cognition (*pratibandhya jñāna*)

(iv) The cognition can be either true or false.

(v) It may or may not be attended with belief.

(vi) It must not be a supposition.

(vii) It must not be an ordinary perception, or an illusory perception due to psychophysical defect.

(viii) The cognition must be propositional.

Let us explain these conditions. We first note that we are dealing with cognitions of contradictory or contrary propositions only. A mere supposition of a proposition can neither prevent nor be prevented by a cognition of the contradictory proposition. If one supposes that *S* is *P*, then this supposition, when it endures as an actual conscious state, cannot prevent us from cognizing or even knowing that *S* is not *P*. So also even if we know that *S* is *P*, this knowledge will not be able to prevent us from supposing that *S* is not *P*; only in this case the supposition will be contrary to fact. Then an illusory perception cannot be prevented from occurring by any cognition of the contradictory proposition. Thus, if we are suffering from jaundice, then even though we know actively

that the wall is not yellow, yet we shall see that the wall is yellow; only in this case the illusory perception will not be attended with belief. Thirdly, the preventer cognition can be either true or false; it is not always the case that only a true cognition can prevent the occurrence of a false cognition, for even a false cognition held with firm conviction can prevent one from cognizing the truth. But whether our cognition is true or false, we must not cognize it in a higher order act to be false if it is to prevent the cognition of the truth. For if we believe or even doubt that our cognition is false, then we shall withhold our belief *in* it, and this cognition without belief will not be able to act as the preventer cognition. This is because of an epistemological principle formulated in Navya-Nyāya thus: (NNEP) The second-order doubt whether a first order belief that *p* is true reduces itself to (or implies) the first order doubt whether *p* is true.

The cognition which is prevented may, however, be a doubt, i.e., cognition not attended with belief; if we cognize with belief that *S* is *P*, then we cannot even doubt that *S* is not *P*.

(3) When Ross talks of evidence-defeating force of testimony he does not talk of what is reasonable to believe or accept; he talks of what a person actually believes. Evidence-defeating force may be generalised, and need not be confined to testimony alone. There are two ways of understanding this concept. To explain the first way, we may give an example from the short story 'There are no snakes in Ireland':–

> The small creature lay curled in the corner by the row of cabinets, light-bunched, defensive, glaring back at the world, tiny tongue flickering fast.
>
> 'Lord save us, it's a snake', said Mrs. Cameron. 'Don't be a bloody fool woman. Don't you know there are no snakes in Ireland? Everyone knows that' said her husband."[28]

This case is the case of preventer-prevented relations. The presence of a firm belief that there are no snakes in Ireland prevents Mr. Cameron to recognise what stares him in the face. This is a relation between two contradictory propositions – there are no snakes in Ireland, and this is a snake, (i.e., there are snakes in Ireland).

But there is another way of understanding evidence-defeating force of a cognition. This force, too, can be understood as a causal force. When there are factors causally operative to produce one type of cognition, say, perception, and there are other factors to produce a different type of cognition, say, inference or testimony, then the factors having more force will prevail. The law is this: When the object of the two cognitions

(the proposition known) is the same, the factors producing perception will prevail over factors producing inference or knowledge by testimony. Thus when one sees that it is raining, and at the same time hears someone telling him that it is raining, the cognition that will result will be perceptual, not verbal. But when the proposition cognised are different, then factors of inference will prevail over those of perception, and factors of verbal knowledge will prevail over factors of other cognitions. Thus when one perceives that it is raining, and hears, at the same time, someone talking to him, say, that he is invited to dinner next day, the verbal cognition (i.e., cognition of the meaning of the sentence) will result and not the perception. The point is that no one can have two different types of cognition at the same time. So one will have only one cognition at a time. This may be empirically supported by the psychological law of the span of attention, that one can attend to only one object (simple or complex) at a time. This concept of force of factors producing cognitions does not require that the propositions cognised be contradictory propositions as in the preventer-prevented relation.

VI. EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF TESTIMONY

There are various sorts of epistemological problems of testimony depending upon the accepted definition of knowledge. We have already mentioned that Fricker accepts one definition, and Ross another. There is also a fundamental difference between Fricker's and Ross's approach to these problems. Fricker discusses almost exclusively the conditions which the speaker has to satisfy in order to produce knowledge in the hearer by making assertions; Ross, on the other hand, is almost exclusively concerned with conditions which the hearer has to satisfy to acquire knowledge by testimony.

(a) Fricker begins by defining '*S* (the speaker) is competent with respect to *P*' thus:

> "(A) *S* asserted that *P* at *t* and *S* was sincere, and was competent at *t* which respect to $P \rightarrow P$.

where *S is competent with respect to P at t* = *df.* at *t*, *S* believes $P \rightarrow P$." which she regards as an analytic truth.

"Now I am taking it for granted that a hearer competent in the speaker's language is able to perceive that a speaker has, say, asserted

that *P* when this is so; thus that knowledge of this premiss is furnished to the hearer in the course of an exercise of the link of testimony, as what he observes to be so. But, looking at (A) we see that from this observation alone it does not follow that *P* obtains. A valid argument from 'He asserted that *P*' to '*P*' needs as further premisses the ancillary information that the speaker was, on the occasion in question, both sincere, and competent about its subject matter. Thus a justification for a belief acquired through testimony, which defends the subject's claim to know by recapitulating the way in which it was caused, must include all three premisses, or their equivalent, such as: 'He told me so, and I know he's an honest chap, and that he was there at the time'".

"I have suggested that knowledge of what speech act has been made by a speaker is something which, in a typical exercise of the link of testimony, a hearer will come to know through perception, in the course of that exercise. But how can he know that the speaker is sincere and competent – given that he is not entitled to assume this without evidence? I cannot offer here a detailed answer to this question. I suggest that such knowledge is often within the hearer's grasp. However this knowledge cannot, I suggest, be regarded as knowledge which the very exercise of the link itself provides the hearer with; its status is rather that of ancillary information which is needed in addition to that provided by the exercise of the link itself. Thus, as regards the distinction made in Section II, testimony emerges on my theory as a secondary and not a primary epistemic link. This means that testimony is not an *autonomous* source of knowledge to an individual; it can yield knowledge to him only in conjunction with knowledge he has gained by other means".[29]

I have quoted from Fricker rather extensively to highlight a problem that she has not noted. By the definition of '*S* is competent with respect to *P* at *t*', it is clear that competence *can* be merely true belief. Thus (A) merely states that the hearer can at best hear what the speaker as holding a true belief sincerely asserts. The speaker to be competent about *P* is not required to *know* that *P*. It will be strange that the hearer will acquire *knowledge second hand* when the speaker does not have that knowledge. Fricker's conclusion that just by hearing others one cannot acquire any knowledge unless one has knowledge 'gained by other means', seems to be much less than what is needed. But what she has actually said implies that a hearer may acquire knowledge second hand (?) if he has 'knowledge gained by other means' which knowledge does

not include that the speaker knows that *p*. This consequence of Fricker's theory is counter-intuitive.

(b) Ross explicitly acknowledges the possibility of a hearer acquiring knowledge from someone's testimony even though the speaker does not know and 'perhaps even disbelieves what he says'.

"*S* can acquire knowledge *incidentally* by way of someone's testimony even though the speaker does not *know* and perhaps even disbelieves what he says. Sometimes someone's making a claim causes me to find out for myself or simply to attend to those already known but not previously assembled considerations which make what he has claimed evident to me. Although the amount of knowledge acquired by way of testimony, but acquired *incidentally* rather than by way of fulfilment of the *function* of testimony, might be as great as those acquired directly, our consideration is restricted to those cases where *S* comes to know that *h* ***because*** *W* both knows and tells *S* that *h*".[30]

As Ross accepts Chisholm's definition of knowledge as true evident belief, the epistemological problem of testimony for Ross becomes the problem of explaining how *S* can have true evident belief on hearing what *W* speaks. He states the following conditions:

> "(1) *Can W's testifying that h to S bring it about that S knows that h*?

Yes, on the following conditions (both sufficient and necessary):

(1) *S* believes *W* (in the double sense of believing that *W* states what he (*W*) takes to be true, and of believing that what he (*S*) takes *W* to state is true);
(2) *h* is true;
(3) *W*'s testifying that *h* brings it about that *h* is evident to *S* and
(4) *W* knows that *h*."[31]

The condition (4) is weakened; "In some situations, one of which is mentioned below, we may not regard (4) as a necessary condition. That is, where (1)–(3) are satisfied and where *W* ought to have known that *h* and could reasonably be excepted to have known that *h* and was in a position to know that *h* (had he been attentive or careful) we may regard his knowledge as 'imputed'."[32]

If this weakening of (4) is not made then (2) cannot be an independent condition; for, according to Chisholm's definition which Ross accepts '*W* knows that *h*' implies that '*h* is true'. We shall discuss the weak version presently.

> "(2) *Can W's testifying that h bring it about that h is evident for S*?

This can and does happen; but what does it involve? Not everything *W* claims *thereby* becomes evident to *S*. A variety of things may account for the fact that what *W* claims is not evident to *S*; for instance,

> (1) *S* may know that *W* is in error;
> (2) *S* may simply distrust *W* in general or on this point; or
> (3) *S* may already believe -*h* and think he knows -*h* to be true. In stating the conditions under which *W*'s asserting *h* brings it about that *h* is evident for *S*, we must provide against circumstances like those."[33]

Ross maintains that it is not a necessary condition for *h*'s becoming evident to *S* that *W knows that h*. He argues, "If *S thought W* knew, *h* would be as strongly warranted for *S* as it would be if *W* actually knew that *h*, as well."[34]

He also argues that it is not a necessary condition "for *h*'s becoming evident to *S* (because *W* says to *S* that *h*) that *W* believes that *h*. What is necessary, according to Ross, is that *S* should believe that *W* believes that *h*.

But there is something more; "the facts that *S* believes *W* believes *h* and even that *S* would (in appropriate circumstances) consider *h* evident to *W* do not by themselves render *h* evident to *S*. There must be some relationship between *S* and *W* which confers a definite epistemic status for *S* upon what *W* asserts. This suggests that we find an epistemic analogus for the state of trust."[35]

He finally concludes: "The conditions for *h*'s becoming evident to *S* upon *W*'s stating *h* can be fulfilled anyway if:

> (1) *S* believes *W* believes *h*.
> (2) *S* believes (dispositionally) that *h* is evident for *W*.
> (3) *h* is not unacceptable for *S*, given *W*'s asserting that *h*.

(4) *W*'s asserting *h* makes *h* reasonable for *S*
(5) *h*, being asserted to *S* by *W*, becomes a member of a concurrent set of propositions each of which is reasonable for *S* at *T* (and at least one of which is already evident to *S*).

In other words, if *W*'s asserting *h* makes *h* reasonable for *S*, then whether *h* is directly evident to *W* or not, *h* may become indirectly evident to *S*. And *S* will find that *h* is reasonable provided it is not reasonable (given *W*'s testimony) for him to think that *W* is disingenuous or mistaken."[36]

"The disadvantage of this situation is that some things *W* asserts may become evident for *S* even though *W* does not know that *h* is neither indirectly not directly evident for *W* and *W* does not even believe that *h* (for sometimes it is not reasonable for *S* to believe that *W* is disingenuous, when he is). Nevertheless this seems to be the way testimony actually functions."[37]

"If we were to reject the 4th condition for the transmission of knowledge through testimony, namely, that *W* knows that *h* happens to make *h* evident for *S* when *h* is also believed by *S* and is true, *S* would have knowledge sometimes created out of a lower epistemic state by the weight his trust in *W* gives to the proposition asserted by *W* and the resultant interaction of *h* and *S*'s concurrent set of reasonable beliefs at least one of which is evident to *S*. We have then to insist that despite the frequently indetectible difference in our own beliefs between the justified true beliefs arrived at through trusting the word of others and knowledge similarly acquired, the essential difference between the transmission of knowledge through testimony and the transmission of evidence through testimony (where we are concerned with true proposition only) is that in the one case the witness must have knowledge and in the other he need not."[38]

We are now in a position to assess Ross's theory by comparing and contrasting it with Fricker's. We find that according to Ross there is no condition which *W* has to fulfil. *W* need not believe *h*, what is necessary is that *S* believes *W* believes *h* and so on. The necessary and sufficient conditions for *h* becoming evident for *S* do not involve anything but *S*'s beliefs about *W*; even for trusting *W*, *S* has simply to believe that *W* is trustworthy. Thus *S* would have knowledge "something created out of a lower epistemic state by the weight his trust in *W* gives to the

proposition asserted by *W*." (fn. 15, p. 55). Whether *h* will be evident for *S* or whether *S* will know that *h* or being told by *W* that *h* depends entirely on what concurrent beliefs *S* has and how *h* fits into the set of *S*'s beliefs. Hence the condition (2) that *h* is true has to be given as an independent condition for *S*'s knowing that *h* on *W*'s testimony. The difference between Ross's and Fricker's theory on this point becomes evident. According to Fricker *h* becomes true simply by being asserted by a competent speaker. The competence of the speaker is not a matter of belief (correct or incorrect) of the hearer. But as Ross is continually talking of what *S* believes, correctly or incorrectly, what *W* believes, correctly or incorrectly, he has to make the truth of *h* an independent condition of *S*'s knowing that *h* on *W*'s testimony.

There is this similarity between Ross and Fricker that both maintain that a hearer may acquire knowledge from the testimony of a speaker who need not have that knowledge. Ross pleads helplessness here and confesses that "nevertheless, this seems to be the way testimony actually functions." (p. 52)

But there is an ambiguity in Ross's position. It is not clear whether he is talking of an actual state of belief or reasonableness of a belief. It is by no means clear that a person cannot believe actually what is unreasonable for him to believe. We shall explain the point by discussing in some detail the problem of whether anyone can actually hold inconsistent beliefs.

Professor Barbara Hall Partee gives a putative example of an inconsistent belief thus:

> "(11) Smith believed that all the women at the party were accompanied by their (monogamous) husbands and that there were more women at the party than men. . . . What are we to make of (12) as a possible response to (11)?
> (12) Smith couldn't believe both of these things, because they're incompatible".

Partee's answer is "that (12) simply expresses an unjustifiable faith in human rationality."[39] But we shall presently see that (12) has a far more radical consequence.

As Partee uses modal expressions "couldn't" we shall symbolize the axiom in modal terms, symbolizing "incompatible" as "the conjunction being 'impossible'".

AXIOM 1 CNM *p*NM*Bxp*.

Using this axiom as a premise and a minimum of modal logic as in the system T, we have:

(1)	CNM *p*NM*Bxp*	— AXIOM 1.
(2)	CNM *Bxp*NM*BxBxp*	— 1, $\frac{Bxp}{p}$
(3)	CNM *p*NM*BxBxp*	— 1, 2, H. S.
(4)	CNM *p*NM*Byp*	— 1, $\frac{y}{x}$
(5)	CNM *Bxp*NM*ByBxp*	— 4, $\frac{Bxp}{p}$
(6)	CNM *p*NM*ByBxp*	— 5, 1, H. S.
(7)	CNM *p*KNM*BxBxp*NM*ByBxp*	— 2, 6, P. C.
(8)	CNM *p*NAM*BxBxp*MB*yBxp*	— 7, De M.
(9)	CNM *p*NMA*BxBxByBxp*	— Distribution of A over M.

Now (9) says that if *p* is impossible, then it is impossible that either someone should believe that he believes that *p*, or (even) someone else should believe that he believes that p. This has the consequence that not merely Smith, but also Partee herself, cannot even *believe* that Smith believes in incompatible propositions. This seems odd, for (9) rules out the *possibility* of even believing that someone can believe in a self-contradiction, let alone any one offering this view as a theory worthy of serious study. Thus (9) excludes the possibility of this other theory, i.e., the possibility of a serious philosophical debate on this question. So then the question arises: what are Partee and others doing when they are asserting that one can hold inconsistent beliefs (*what are* they asserting)?

The problem is to decide whether ascription of belief is a description of a mental state or a theoretical explanation of behaviour. If belief be a theoretical concept it is subject to various theoretical constraints specially of logic. Then it is proper to stipulate that an inconsistent proposition *cannot* be an object of belief. Chisholm in his *Theory of Knowledge* continually speaks of acceptability, of what is more rational to believe and so on without considering what a person actually accepts or believes. Chisholm defines only 'withholding' in terms of actual belief and disbelief. Ross, however, when talking of evidence-defeating force

of testimony does not talk of what is reasonable to believe or accept; he talks of what a person actually believes. But accepting Chisholm's theory of knowledge, Ross explains the actual working of testimony in terms of what is more reasonable to believe, and not in terms of what a person actually believes. Ross also talks of how testimony 'actually works'. This leads to some undesirable consequences of Ross's theory. For example, in explaining 'a variety of things' which may 'account for the fact, that what *W* claims is not evident to *S*', Ross states the condition (1) '*S* may know that *W* is in error'. Yet as we have already seen in the case of Rescher that although he *knew* that Prior and he himself were in error and noted it in footnote 3, p. 27, still later on p. 69 the false proposition believed earlier, again, becomes evident to him. The reason for this kind of inconsistency seems to be that everyone knows millions of propositions which all have to be true, still it is not always possible to find out from this enormous mass of knowledge the relevant proposition the contradictory of which becomes evident. Even if *S* knows that *W* is in error, he may fail to *make use* of this relevant information later on; that is, he may fail to take note of the fact that it is *W who he already knows is in error*, is stating what he states. Condition (3) '*S* may already believe *–h* and think he knows *–h* to be true' will not be able to prevent *h* from becoming evident to *S*. What is necessary here is to hold that this belief of *S* must be an actively held belief, i.e., must be belief_1 in Ross's sense. What Navya-Nyāya points out in this context is that so long as we *actively* believe that *h*, we *cannot start believing* that *–h*. It is the origin of the belief that is prevented by the active belief in the contrary or the contradictory proposition.

Thus we find that if we have to explain the conditions under which 'not everything *W* claims *thereby* becomes evident to *S*' we have to consider only the actively held beliefs and episodic knowledge of *S at that time*.

There are other difficulties in Ross's theory from the Nyāya point of view. If 1(1) ('*S* may know that *W* is in error' (p. 41)) *prevents h* from becoming evident to *S* when *W* says so, *then negation* of (1) ought to be a necessary condition of *h*'s becoming evident to *S* on *W*'s authority. Yet what will be the negation of (1)? There are two possibilities – (a) *S* must not know that *W* is in error, or (b) *S* knows that *W* is *not* in error. Now (b) is too strong even according to Ross, for the condition he considers necessary is '(4) Either (i) *S* believes_2 that *W* could not err about *h*, or (ii) *S* believes_2 *W* knows that *h*. . . . ' (p. 48). Now (4)

(i) and (ii) are not (a) either; for (a) asserts that lack of knowledge that *W* is in error is a necessary condition, whereas (4) (i) and (ii) assert positive $belief_2$ to be so. According to Nyāya (1) (p. 41) is true, hence (a) is a necessary condition for acquiring belief, (evident belief) from testimony, but not (4) (i) and (ii) (p. 48), for not to know is not the same thing as to believe, not even to $believe_2$; one may not know that *h* even if one is totally unaware of *h*.

The Nyāya theory is radically different from the theories of Fricker and Ross. If a person has to acquire knowledge second-hand from what a speaker asserts, then the speaker cannot also get his knowledge second-hand, for this will lead to infinite regress. It may be that there is a sequence of speaker, hearer turned speaker and so on. Then the first speaker has to know truth first-hand, either by perception, or by inference or by some other means. The hearer cannot acquire second-hand knowledge if the speaker does not have first-hand knowledge. Then the speaker has to speak truthfully what he knows first-hand. Then the problem is to explain why the speaker should speak the truth to anyone else. In modern times of so many scientific and technological secrets (like atomic secrets), it is very often the case that the truth cannot be 'leaked' to anyone who may demand it. Thus not only does the speaker, but also the hearer must be 'qualified', for example, trustworthy. The point here is that Ross has emphasised that the speaker must be trustworthy; but the hearer, too, has to be trustworthy and otherwise qualified (intellectually). It all depends on what type of knowledge is to be transmitted. In Indian philosophy in general a fundamental distinction is made between empirical information and spiritual, secret, information. Sentences conveying empirical information also need properly qualified hearers, i.e., hearers should be not merely competent in the speaker's language. This linguistic competence is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for a hearer to be fit for receiving information from a speaker. A speaker has the right to withhold information in many cases. For example, if a robber pursuing a man loses his track, and asks someone who knows where the victim is, it will be quite appropriate for him (on moral grounds) to withhold this information. There are reasons to believe that there are truths which are never communicated, and are lost forever with the death of their knowers, and had to be rediscovered by later scholars. The question, under what conditions does a speaker speak the truth to a hearer, under what conditions is a person qualified to be a hearer, does not seem to have been discussed in this connection by

Western philosophers. There is no criterion for choosing persons in whom a speaker can confide, to whom he can speak freely without reserve. If knowledge is to be transmitted from the speaker to the hearer, the trust between them has to be mutual, and not one-sided.

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NOTES

[1] In Indian philosophy a school of Advaita Vedānta holds that there is only one individual *(eka-jīva-vāda)*, cf. *Tattvapradīpikā*, Citsukhācārya, pp. 581ff, and also *Siddhāntaleśa-saṁgrahaḥ*, Appaya Dikṣita, pp. 120–121.

[2] Hintikka, however, argues thus: 'A statement is normally addressed to a certain man or certain men. A highly interesting special case arises when the addressee is the same person as the maker of the "statement." Of course this is a very special case; so special, indeed, that you may be reluctant to assimilate it to what we normally call statements. When you address a remark to another man, you have to do something else to make your point. In contrast, when you are "addressing yourself", nothing like this is needed. What happens is only the act of trying to persuade yourself of something, i.e., the act of seriously entertaining something in your mind. (Aquinas might have called it an act of thinking something *cum assensu*.) Acts of this kind are not ordinarily called statements. Nevertheless it seems to me that they can be considered as special cases or at least "analogical extensions" of what we do call statements and that some interesting light can be thrown on their logical peculiarities by so doing.' *Knowledge and Belief* (p. 6, fn. 2.) Even though it may be admitted that I can make a statement to myself, it will not be possible for me to know anything second-hand from myself. If a hearer is someone who knows something second-hand from a speaker, then I cannot be my hearer.

[3] "The primary communicative intention is the intention, for instance, to say such-and-such to the audience . . . to produce an object – the speech act itself – which is *perceptible* publicly." Quoted by David Cooper in 'The Epistemology of Testimony' (p. 92, italics mine).

[4] "Now I am taking it for granted that a hearer competent in the speaker's language is able to *perceive* that a speaker has, say, asserted that *P* when this is so." 'The Epistemology of testimony', Elizabeth Fricker (p. 72, italics mine).

[5] David Cooper, *Loc. cit.* (p. 94).

[6] D. M. Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of Mind* (p. 326, italics mine).

[7] The cognition of a ground with a jar (on it).

[8] K. Kunjunni Raja, *Indian Theories of Meaning*, p. 110. The Navya-Nyāya philosophers, however, reply to this objection by pointing out that the memory impressions of the sounds in their spoken order are the causes of the resulting perception of the word as a whole.

[9] Quine, *Quiddities*, pp. 166–67.

[10] 'Speaking with an eye to speech is one thing, and speaking with an eye to content is another'. Quine, *ibid.*, p. 167.

[11] Kunjunni Raja, *ibid.*, p. 115; quotation from Russell's *An Enquiry into Meaning and Truth*, p. 24.
[12] Kunjunni Raja, *ibid.*, p. 97.
[13] Kunjunni Raja, *ibid.*, p. 126.
[14] Kunjunni Raja, *ibid.*, p. 124.
[15] Kunjunni Raja, *ibid.*, p. 120.
[16] In his lectures in Calcutta in 1986.
[17] Augustine's *Confessions* quoted in *PI*, and also in 'Wittgenstein and Augustine DE MAGISTRO' by M. F. Burnyeat, p. 3.
[18] David Cooper, 'Assertion, phenomenology, and essence', p. 88.
[19] Arthur Falk, 'Comments', *Rabindra Bharati Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 1987, pp. 15ff.
[20] *Theory of Knowledge*, Second edition, p. 135.
[21] *Models and Ultraproducts*, by J. L. Bell and A. S. Slomson, p. 10. This proposition is, however, false.
[22] *Mind and Belief*, pp. 70–71.
[23] *Many-Valued Logic*, fn. 3, p. 27.
[24] *Thought*, Princeton, 1973, p. 123.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[26] "(*Tg*) If x believes that p then under favourable conditions and unless there are some factors which prevent that belief from being manifested in the judgment that p, x will, upon considering whether or not p, judge that p (is the case).
(*Th*) If x believes that he believes that s, then, under favourable conditions, and unless there are some factors which prevent that belief from being manifested in the judgment that he (x) believes that s, x will, upon considering whether or not he believes that s, judge that he believes that s." *Loc. cit.*, p. 56.
"(*Tj*) If x believes that he believes that s, then, under favourable conditions, and unless there are some factors which prevent that belief from being manifested in the judgment that s, x will, upon considering whether or not s, judge that s." *Loc. cit.*, p. 69.
[27] "(I am trying to avoid claiming that the first was *causally* responsible for her answer, since I think that the present problem can be worked out without first having to consider the problem of causal versus non-causal factors, explanations.
[28] *No Comebacks*, Frederick Forsyth, p. 51.
[29] Elizabeth Fricker, 'The Epistemology of Testimony', pp. 73ff.
[30] *Loc. cit.*, p. 41.
[31] *Loc. cit.*, p. 40.
[32] Fn. 8, p. 54.
[33] *Loc. cit.*, p. 41.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[38] *Ibid.*, fn. 15, p. 45.
[39] 'The semantics of belief-sentences', pp. 317–318.

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ARINDAM CHAKRABARTI

TELLING AS LETTING KNOW

1. CLAIMS AND CAVEATS

We often find out facts about distant times and places from the words of unexamined authorities. Francis Bacon was fined £40,000 nearly 400 years ago for taking bribes while in public office. Some of us know this just by reading popular books on the history of philosophy, not necessarily written by great historians whose strength of documentary evidence we have cared to establish first. I also know that I was born on the 16th of September. My mother told me so. Thus parents, books, teachers, newspapers, the radio, historians, eye-witnesses, laboratory-technicians and specialists *tell* us that *p*, and as a result, on many occasions – though not on all – we come to *know* that *p*.

Such knowledge depends upon and is comparable to knowledge by sense-perception, memory or inference on the basis of personal observation, but is not reducible to, i.e., not just another case of these above-mentioned varieties of knowledge.

Surely, when my mother uttered the words (in which she reported my date of birth) I had to hear them, both in the sense of hearing the noises she made and in the culturally conditioned sense of perceptually discriminating which words of her language she was using by making these noises. I also had – however automatically – to *remember* which word meant what in the language she spoke. In some even larger sense of 'perceiving' or 'seeing' I even had to *perceive* or *see* that she was seriously asserting what her sentence meant on that occasion of its use and recognize perceptually or inferentially her intention to inform me. I might have had to exercise other inferential skills to eliminate from the context any possibility of a joke just as I inferred from the rest of the sentences of the book that that remark about Bacon was not meant as an exaggeration or as an unasserted merely got-up philosophical example-sentence. (One could utter the sentence: "Some empiricists took bribes from every janitor of the Tower of London" as an example-sentence in Elementary Logic without telling one's audience that some empiricists did that.)

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 99–124.

But the end-product, namely my knowledge of Bacon's public disgrace or my date of birth, is not *reducible* to just an amalgam of such sense-perception, memory, or inference. It is word-generated knowledge or knowledge by testimony (K. T. for short) – a *sui generis*. That is going to be the central claim of this paper.

Upon the received view or standard account of linguistic communication, comprehension and credence fall apart. A trust-less understanding of the uttered sentence is taken as epistemically prior to and simpler than getting informed by the utterance. Even where we swallow information unquestioningly, uptake and acceptance might not be psychologically distinguishable but the standard account insists that they should be conceptually distinguished. Of course it will be perverse to argue in the following fashion:

Premise 1: I understand an utterance of the sentence "Bush is angry" only if I know what it means.
Premise 2: What it means is that Bush is angry.

Conclusion: I understand an utterance of the sentence "Bush is angry" only if I know that Bush is angry.

However, it is not so very obvious what is wrong with this argument. I shall not argue that any one who distrusts a particular utterance fails to understand it, because it goes without saying that you need to grasp the meaning of an utterance just as clearly in order to have disbelief in it as you need to do if you have to rely on it. But I think the standard separation of knowing what *S* said and knowing that what *S* said is the case tends to encourage an inferential account of the latter kind of knowing or K. T. It also tends to promote an ontology of abstract contents insofar as it requires us to come up with an answer to the question: what is knowledge of meaning (falling short of knowledge of a fact) knowledge of? One exciting and unorthodox consequence of accepting the irreducibility thesis about K. T. might be that trustless uptake or mere understanding should be regarded as the more complicated attitude (necessary, for instance, for accounting for our appreciation of fictional utterances or jokes) rather than as the simpler core compared to direct derivation of knowledge that *p* from an honest and informed utterance to the effect that *p*. The picture suggested would be that the so-called

beliefless grasp of the content of an assertion is *K. T. minus trust*, rather than K. T. being *understanding plus trust*.

Since Hume argued (*Enquiry*, Chapter X) that our reliance on Testimony is just a garden case of inductive reasoning on the basis of the observed trustworthiness of the source of information, it has become the received view in Western philosophy that such knowledge from telling is reducible to inference, at least in principle. Of course, there is the other, more individualistic streak in Western Epistemology which refuses to give the status of knowledge at all to correct information gathered from a trusted teller. Explicitly stated by Locke, and perhaps traceable back to the passage in Plato's Theatetus (201C) which dismisses true judgments on the basis of reliable hearsay as non-knowledge, this view would look upon the enterprise of knowledge as a task to be performed single-handedly. Thus Locke seems to suggest that only what one has oneself found out by personal contact with reality or through hard epistemic toil of other sorts counts as knowledge:

> The floating of other men's opinions in our brains makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was Science is in us by Opiniatretry. . . . Such borrowed wealth like Fairy-money, though it were Gold in the hand from which he received it will be but Leaves and dust when it comes to use. (*Essay*, I, iv, #23)

I shall not try in this paper to combat such an extreme dismissal of K. T. The social character of knowledge, which Locke's kind of epistemological individualism tends to overlook becomes more and more inescapable with the progress and sophistication of Science. Dependence on authority goes deeper than just the level of learning details of scientific data from the specialist. As Quinton points out

> . . . the instruments of criticism in whose possession cognitive autonomy consists are themselves provided by authority.

Imagine a meticulous seeker of knowledge refusing to believe a laboratory report on a certain specimen, wishing to first examine it herself under a microscope. Insofar as she takes the accuracy of the microscope on trust her claim of complete cognitive autonomy would be self-refuting.

Let me bluntly state at this point that I think every competent user of language can on many occasions pass on knowledge and receive genuine knowledge through telling and being told. To think otherwise

is to make the scope of the term 'knowledge' unrealistically narrow and to be blind to one vital function of language, namely, the function of spreading or instilling well-grounded information. So I shall take the knowledge-hood of K. T. for granted and then only try to resist the reductive pressures by defending K. T.'s independence.

In the history of classical Indian epistemology, and about a thousand years before Hume, K. T.'s independence was threatened by Cārvāka materialists, Buddhists and Vaiśeṣikas who tried to reduce our alleged knowledge from the trusted words of an honest knowledgeable informant to either perception, or memory or inference. The Nyāya school tried to refute all these reductionistic proposals by insisting that the hearer's process of retrieving the very piece of knowledge which normally causes the speaker's utterance of a sentence is a unique "means of knowing" on a par with but never fully subsumable under sense-perception, introspection, memory, or inference. Trying often to express insights emerging out of Sanskrit texts dealing with this issue in the idiom of contemporary analytic epistemology, I shall defend K. T.'s independence in my own way.

To start with, some caveats. Although in what follows I shall be talking only about 'speakers' and 'hearers', I hope my arguments can be extended *mutatis mutandis* to cover the cases of writers and readers. There are, to be sure, additional problems in the case of written, type-written or printed words because ink-marks on paper need not be generated by the writer's (if there is any writer at all) intention to communicate knowledge. But I shall not deal with those additional issues here.

Secondly, although to avoid confusion I shall only discuss indicative utterances and our knowledge of truths about the world derived from them, I envisage the possibility of a general theory of knowing by being told which will also cover imperative utterances and our knowledge of what or how to do. We surely make claims of practical knowledge, both in the sense of learning technical know-hows and finding out morally correct or prudentially wise courses of action. And some of these knowledge-claims are made on the basis of what we are instructed, asked or advised to do.

A request or a command can be an instance of telling as much as an account or an assertion can be. Correspondingly, by listening to my instructor, or reading the manual or following a religious text we can *know* what to do or how to act. Spelling out the content of such knowledge constitutes a hard task for any theory which takes *truth* as

a crucial feature of knowledge, but I don't want to speak to that issue at this stage.

Thirdly, I mentioned knowledge of the remote past or faraway places as impressive cases of knowledge by testimony because in such cases testimony seems to be irreplaceable or not easily replaceable by any other source of knowledge. But in numerous day-to-day contexts we actually rely on spoken or written words even if it concerns something happening very close by or even here at the present time. Thus our knowledge of train or plane-schedules, knowledge of the data, knowledge of what the person next to me is feeling or thinking, etc., are samples of knowledge which we standardly derive from words we hear or read. So, such knowledge does not have to be about distant places and times. Take the case of a person introducing herself at a social gathering. "I am Anita," says the stranger at a party and I come to know that she is Anita. If I am asked later on in the evening how I knew that *that* very person is Anita, I can perfectly rationally respond: "Because I was told by her" (in spite of the possibility that she was misleading me or joking with me).

This brings me to the fourth caveat. I introduced the topic as knowledge from the words of the authority. But the term 'authority' need not be taken too seriously. Especially, we should not smell any theological deference to some privileged custodians of authority or elitism here. A thief can be an 'authority' in this sense if he speaks from knowledge, speaks sincerely and without any wish to deceive. A murderer's words can give us knowledge when he is confessing in court. Usually, only such utterances count as knowledge-generating as are themselves *actually* caused by the speaker's knowledge of the very same fact. But sometimes even this requirement can be relaxed. A tape-recorder, a telephone-answering machine, a child parroting its elders can make us know valuable facts. Nevertheless, we do not need first to establish the general trustworthiness of the speaker in each case. Sometimes, of course, a topic-specific authority of the speaker is *presumed*. If my mother tells me about the time and circumstances of my birth I tend to have justified beliefs, rather than if strangers tell me about it. Notice that a presumption is not a *premise*. Unless we have good reason to doubt someone's version, it is natural for us to believe, and we even have the right to be sure, so that if what was said turns out to be true our belief counts as knowledge.

Finally, I said I shall be claiming that such knowledge is com-

parable but not reducible to perception, inference or memory. What did I mean by 'comparable' and 'not reducible'? Let me make that a bit clearer.

Obviously, I am not claiming that whenever someone tells me that *p*, I come to know that *p*. Like truths, jokes, stories and lies are told as well, and often we find out sooner or later that what was told is a lie, a joke, or a piece of fiction. Apart from such deliberately non-true utterances, some utterances spring from the speaker's own mistakes or fantasies. Not all spreaders of rumour know that they are not imparting knowledge. If we believe in such an utterance we end up being in the same error. So our claims of knowledge from others' words run the risk of misunderstanding, deception, and honestly transmitted false belief. But in this testimony is in the same position as inductive inference or perception or memory. We can be deceived by the senses, misinterpret their message, go wrong in our generalization, and can misremember past experiences. But just as in spite of this defeasibility we can offer as justification for our knowledge-claim 'I saw it with my own eyes' or 'it follows from widely corroborated generalizations' or 'I remember it clearly' – we can also offer 'I was told by an eye-witness or an authority on the subject' – as an answer deserving equal epistemic prestige. So, when I say 'comparable' I mean comparable in epistemic risk and respectability.

Now for the meaning of 'not reducible'. There is a trivial sense in which all knowledge could be reduced to inference. A claimant of knowledge as distinguished from a mere possessor of true belief, we agree, must be ready to provide a proof, a ground, an evidence, or a justification. If giving reasons for a belief automatically count as 'reasoning' and justifications are understood as arguments then we could call even our perceptual knowledge *inferential*. One could distinguish between two levels here. Suppose the alleged knowledge in question is *knowledge that p*. Is our demand for justification (which is relevant for the knowledgehood of the belief) a demand for evidence supporting the proposition *p*, or a demand for evidence for the proposition that the subject knows that *p*?

Consider first the case of perceptually obtained knowledge. When on the basis of sense experience I claim to know that this liquid is bitter, I could be asked to justify my belief. In response, I could just say, "I can taste the bitterness in it." This constitutes first-level justification of the proposition believed in. But one could press me further

and ask: "Why do you believe what you taste (on this occasion or generally)?" My answer to that, if not naturalistically causal or statistically reliabilistic – could be inevitably inferential. For instance, I could justify my trust in perception by an inference on the basis of the empirical fact that false beliefs usually lead to practical failures or frustrations whereas trust upon the verdict of my senses has led me generally to success and satisfaction. This will be a second-level justification or a meta-justification for my – originally perceptual – justifying ground. Similarly (to take Austin's example), when in answer to the question: "How do you know the Persians were defeated at Marathon?" – I say "Herodotus expressly states that they were" – that does constitute adequate first-level justification. Of course, we have to assume that I am ready to add "and I have no reason to suspect deliberate distortion or lack of correct information or ambiguity or insincerity in that part of Herodotus." But, parallelly, in the perceptual case we have to assume the perceiver's preparedness to add "and I have no reason to suspect that my sense-organs were defective, or that I was dreaming, or that my brain was being manipulated by a malevolent demon or was in a vat, etc." Now, one can go on to ask at the second level – either about this particular occasion or generally – "Why do you believe what you are told?" My answer to that distinct query will be an appeal to some sort of non-deductive inference from pragmatic success or survival-value or from people's general veracity-commitment: unless I answer naturalistically that I cannot help it or more strongly that since I use language to communicate I have to be generally disposed to accept people's say-so on pain of pragmatic self-stultification. If an analogous inferential answer or transcendental argument at the second level of justification does *not* tend to reduce all perception to inference, then I do not see why necessity of a similar inferential legitimization should brand our knowledge from people's words as *inferential* knowledge. At most it shows my knowledge *that I know that p* to be inferential; my knowledge *that p* still remains knowing by being told – good old K. T. – pristine in its irreducibility.

As I have admitted at the very outset K. T. has to depend on perception, e.g., of the noises the speaker makes or of the ink-marks the writer leaves on paper, on a dispositional memory of the entire socio-linguistic training which we call language-mastery, on inferential techniques of contextual disambiguation. But such dependence can be shown in the reverse direction as well. Most of us admit that percep-

tions like recognizing a particular flower or bush as Rhododendron typically depend upon usually uncritical acceptance of some testimony or other. That does not make such identificatory observations *reducible* to knowledge by testimony!

Suppose someone in this room points to a notebook and says, "This notebook was bought in Cambridge." I need to *look* at the notebook to find out the demonstrated referent of 'This' and also perhaps *inferentially* to eliminate Cambridge, England, from the range of possible speaker-intended meanings. Still – if I end up getting certain that the notebook was indeed bought in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the certainty turns out to have been knowledge I cannot call my knowledge just a mixture of visual and auditory perception, guessing and remembering, etc. I knew by being told. The epistemic process can perhaps be *resolved* into bits of those other kinds of knowledge but the integrated end-product cannot be *reduced* to them.

So – I hope I have made my central claim clear. Let me now formulate it once again in a fuller form by enriching the simple-looking notion of 'telling' a little more:

(1) When S utters a sentence of the form "Fa" in a language that H has mastery of, it is natural for H's correct understanding of the sentence to take the form of the *awareness that Fa*, unless the context warrants the suspicion that S is lying, joking, speaking hypothetically, merely quoting non-committally, or is himself mis-informed.

(2) If S's utterance of "Fa" is caused by knowledge that Fa then H's belief generated by a comprehending audition of the utterance also, on most occasions, deserves the title of knowledge. To use the words of Michael Welbourne, "Knowledge is never denatured" when it travels in the vehicle of understood words. (See Welbourne, 1986, p. 49.)

(3) Our beliefless uptake of the so-called bare propositional content of an utterance (e.g., when we understand as an example given in a Grammar or Logic class the sentence "Socrates envied Plato for his nose") is a more sophisticated and complex cognitive event than our straightforward trusting intake of information. Just as lying or storytelling is a more sophisticated or artificial activity than speaking the truth (compare Reid, "Truth . . . requires no art or training"), understanding with a pinch or lump of salt is more complicated than a believing grasp of meaning where the characterizing tie between the qualifier (F) and the qualificand (a) itself works as the tie of commitment or assertion. Reception of the other person's message *naturally* comes unsalted.

(4) Even the message decoded from a command or request, i.e. what one is told to be or when or how one is told to do something, can be represented as something *known* from words with adequate care. Of course, one cannot claim to derive knowledge that the addressee *has* the property of bringing the chair from the request "Bring the chair please." Since commands cannot be assessed as *true* or *false*, Dummett has suggested using the neutral terms *correct* and *incorrect* for them. The command "Bring the chair" – issued to John – is correct just in case it is John who is asked to bring the chair. Bringing the chair can, as it were, be known to qualify John in two distinct ways – actually and commandedly. To get the message of an imperative is to grasp who is *required, desired* or *obligated* to bring about what, just as to get the message of an indicative is to grasp what or who is *asserted* to be of what sort. This uniform account of knowledge from telling surely avoids the problem of the standard Fregean sense-force model.

2. IS K. T. PERCEPTION OR MEMORY?

Colloquially we often describe understanding or even believing somone's statements as 'seeing'. We wait till we *see* someone's point and as long as the statement sounds too bizarre we do not quite *see* it making sense. Along with the words even the information is sometimes spoken of as having been 'heard'. This usage is not confined to English. Building up on similar usage the materialistic empiricist Cārvāka school of heterodox Indian philosophy had apparently tried to reduce knowing from words into a kind of perception. Now, informative utterances which transmit knowledge hitherto unattained by the auditor usually concern items which are outside his current perceptual range. No one can seriously insist that through trusted words we actually see or touch or taste or smell the objects spoken of. To listen to an eye-witness's account of a past incident would then have to be like the experience of watching a *feelie* as imagined by Huxley in *A Brave New World.* But sometimes through the assistance of vividly remembered perceptual correlates of words we *perceive* things in a broader sense, as it were in our mind's eye. Could the information-intake be said to be perceptual in that sense? But the phenomenological evidence seems to go against this suggestion. Every doubtfree comprehension of an utterance describing an unperceived situation does not take the form of even imagining what it would be for one to perceive it oneself. There is a broader sense in which

we are said to perceptually identify speech-acts, i.e., know whether someone is committedly asserting or just entertaining a hypothesis or telling a tale or cracking a joke. But to perceive that someone is seriously and with authority saying that p is not to perceive that p. Two technical difficulties for the perceptualist reduction have been pointed out by Jagadīśa, a sixteenth-century Indian philosopher of the new Nyāya school.

In perception, one is typically at the mercy of the senses. Sometimes the sensory data are touched up or processed through memory (which might include previous linguistic training) and recognitional capabilities. Once we rely upon memory-assisted perception we have to include within the content of our allegedly sentence-generated knowledge *all that I perceptually recognize* at the time of listening to the utterance of the sentence. We might be reminded of some special feature of the speaker by the special accent or intonation which we cannot help noticing while we hear the utterance and as a result my perceptually obtained belief might be the belief that a certain Californian believes that Oxford is a boring city when the utterance was simply "Oxford is a boring city." So the perceptualist reduction will let in a lot of extra content which we don't want to include into exactly what I learn *from* the words. I might see and hear lots of nuances and other recognizable features of the utterance, knowledge of which could not be equated with what I *learn* from the utterance itself.

Secondly, in a speech-propagated belief the exact structure of the content is uniquely determined by the speaker's choice of words, word-order, and the speaker-intended mode of presentation of the objects of reference. From the utterance "The cat is on the mat" we learn that the cat is on the mat and not that the mat is under the cat, even if the two descriptions are extensionally equivalent. Had it been a perceptual experience – we could play around with the order of quantification or predication without falsifying the claim of knowledge. If I saw Bush drinking vodka without realizing that it was Bush and it was vodka that he was drinking – I can still be said (in a *de re* idiom) to have seen Bush drinking vodka. But if somebody told me "An important American statesman was drinking the favorite Russian drink" – I cannot know-by-being-told (because I was not told) that Bush was drinking vodka, even if I rightly guessed or otherwise visualized that very situation and even if that were the situation which prompted the speakers' description. Thus K. T. is not perception.

Memory, of course, plays a very vital role in K. T. We have to call up the meanings of individual words and store our general syntactial training in our memory. But if the end-knowledge as a whole had to be merely reproductive then we could only be informed about situations which we have ourselves previously observed. Surely, in this sense, not all knowledge-imparting tellings are *remindings*. The major point of using language is to extend our fellow-beings' stock *beyond* their personal observations and reminiscences. By understanding *new* sentences in a trusting manner we most certainly come to know facts which we did not ourselves witness and hence could not be reminded of. K. T. might be similar to remembering and some verbal reports when well-understood may create the illusion in a hearer that she is just recalling what she in fact never observed; yet that does not make the resulting sentence-generated knowledge a case of mere memory. From testimony I *can* but from memory I *cannot* retrieve information which I have not myself stored observationally into my own system.

It was Thomas Reid who suggested the comparison between receiving information about our surroundings from our senses and receiving information through language used by our fellow creatures. Reid could not have meant that listening to a report (which you trust) *is* a case of sensory acquaintance with the reported state of affairs. By this comparison he was mainly stressing the *directness* of our knowledge from words as against the inferential account given by Hume who not only called it 'reasoning' from testimony but explicitly reduced the process to drawing conclusions from the trustworthiness of the source, etc.

3. SOME SUGGESTED INFERENTIAL RECONSTRUALS

A philosophical claim is known by the chief rival it resists. My chief rival is the proposed inferential reduction of our process of knowledge-extraction out of a truth-telling's words. When I happen to earn the right to be sure that p in virtue of being told by a radio-newsreader or a specialist or an eyewitness that p – do I need to reason in the following fashion?

A1 S is generally reliable, i.e., whatever S says tends to be true.
B1 S has said that p.

∴ p is likely to be true.

This reconstruction not only whittles down the strength of the resulting conviction, it requires us to establish the global veracity of every speaker who tells us what happened. Such a requirement is at best unrealistic and at worst circular. Spies, who practice dishonesty as an art, are the best sources of a certain sort of knowledge. Usually only that particular utterance needs to spring from the speaker's knowledge of (and desire to communicate) the very same fact. And even this constraint can be a bit relaxed. You can tell me that *p* while you yourself doubt it. By trustful acceptance of your conveyed content I may come to know that *p* if originally *p* figured in someone's – not necessarily yours – first-hand knowledge. Children conveying important telephone-messages to parents and British Rail announcers telling train-timings often have little comprehension of or conviction in what they are saying. Yet if the message is correct and the trains happen to run on time – knowledge can arise in the hearer of the content of such reports or notices. There is also a fascinating case discussed in the Nyāya literature right from the thirteenth century A.D. where I get K. T. out of a sentence uttered by a deluded deceiver, a man who says the opposite of what he believes when his relevant belief happens to be compensatingly false. If we do not suspect him at all and unreflectively take him to be the truth teller that (unbeknownst to himself) he is on that occasion – we do end up getting correctly informed, albeit somewhat like a Gettier counter-example.

There are of course at least two distinct links which need to be established inductively if this naive inferential account has to work: viz., the link between the uttered words and the belief of the utterer, and the link between this belief and the fact of the matter which the words claim to report. The first link fails with insincerity and unseriousness. The second link fails with the speaker being misinformed or mistaken. It is not only the problem of the inductive leap (from *past* experience of speakers being sincere and well-informed to their being so on the current occasion) which initiates the inferential project. Whatever *evidence* (knowledge of premises) we have of people being *sincere* in the past will be ineliminably *linguistic* in nature. Similarly, if we have to compare other people's beliefs with personally checked factual circumstances (to see whether these speakers are habitually *right*) we have to rely on their spoken words as vehicles of their beliefs. Someone who entertains the possibility that speakers are generally mistaken or the

possibility that they could be habitual liars – could hardly get the above sort of argument off the ground.

What if, instead of appealing to the general reliability of the speaker, the reductionist appeals to some topic or occasion-specific reliability? My mother could be an otherwise superstitious inaccurate exaggerating reporter. But when she tells me about the time and circumstances of my birth, I tend to have justified belief. On that particular occasion I think I have the right to *presume* that she is an honest disseminator of her personally and perceptually acquired knowledge. Similarly, I presume that my optic nerves are not malfunctioning when I visually perceive an object. That does not make my perceptual judgment a conclusion drawn from the premise that my optic nerves are not malfunctioning. The honesty, etc., of the speaker is in this sense *not* a premise, and if I dress it up as one I get an inference like the following:

A2 On this occasion, *S* must have spoken from knowledge
B2 On this occasion, *S* said that *p*

∴ *p*

If in the first premise the occasion is individuated in terms of the understood utterance, i.e., as an occasion for saying that *p*, then the premise boils down to: When *S* said that *p*, he must have been speaking from personal knowledge that *p*. But this premise could not even be established without first establishing the truth of *p* which figures as the conclusion.

A distinction commonly drawn in classical Indian epistemology is relevant here: viz., the distinction between a causal condition which is *in itself* effective and a causal condition which is effective only when it is known. That our sense-organs are functioning properly is a condition which is causally effective *in itself* for bringing it about that the exercise of those sense-organs generates knowledge rather than error. But the cause of inferential knowledge, e.g, that the patient has illness *I* because she has symptom-set *T* is the universal connection: whoever shows *T* has *I*, which does not to generate inference just by prevailing in itself, but needs to be known by the inferring epistemic agent. Now the local (*not* global) veracity of the teller, in other words, that the particular utterance has sprung from justified true belief (at some point in the chain of information-propagation) *is* a causal condition for the

telling to be knowledge-generating. But it is more like the normalcy of the sensory apparatus – a cause *in itself* and not a cause which has to be *known* in order to be operative. The speaker needs to *be* a truth-teller (and in the standard case a knower of the relevant fact) but need to be established or recognized to be so by the hearer first.

To avoid patent circularity the above inference could be broken up into three steps exploiting the distinction between the *two* links I have already talked about:

A3: The speaker is sincere on this occasion, i.e., if she is saying the *p* she believes that *p*.
B3: The speaker is competent on this occasion, i.e., if she believes that *p* then *p*.
C3: She is saying that *p*.

∴ *p*

Notice that the above inference is deductively valid and accordingly the principle (called 'Principle A' by Fricker)

> "*S* asserted that *P* at *t* and *S* was sincere and was competent at *t* with respect to $p \rightarrow p$"

is said to be an analytic truth about the speech act of assertion. One could be tempted to argue against this revised version of the claim that every K. T. is obtained as a conclusion of an inference of the above sort that it fails to do justice to the *epistemic advance* which a possessor of K. T. can justifiably claim. Thus David Cooper objected against Fricker's principle (quoted above) that it

> is at odds with the claim that a hearer must be satisfied that *S* is competent 'before he believes what he is told' . . . This is impossible if it is built into the notion of a sincere competent assertion that it is true . . . – *S*'s competence cannot play the evidential role in justifying the hearer's conclusion which Fricker wants it to. The premises . . . would not constitute evidence for *P* since they would entail it.

But such a criticism fails to notice the cleverness of Fricker's break up of the argument. No single premise of it by itself entails the conclusion so that we could bring the charge of direct circularity against it. Both competence and sincerity are defined in terms of hypotheticals

and the only categorical premise: that the speaker has really asserted that p is supposed to be established *directly* by perception by the hearer. The fact that taken *together* the premises entail the conclusion could not itself be the ground for dismissing the epistemic *novelty* of the conclusion, without prejudging (negatively) the bigger and tougher issue as to whether deductive arguments can ever be knowledge-advancing.

A more damaging worry about this indirect inferential account of being reasonably sure that p from someone's testifying that p is this: can the hearer establish this sort of occasion-specific sincerity (that S is sincere at t) or competence of the speaker without first establishing the truth of the particular belief in question? Treating principle A as the *definition* of assertion has the consequence that I would never know whether you *really* have asserted something unless I know whether you *would have* said what you did competently and sincerely if it were in fact false. Establishment of the fact that someone has genuinely performed an act of assertion in this rich (subjunctive-conditional fulfilling) sense itself deserves to be recognized as an onerous inferential process. If we do not bother to establish the speaker's occasion-specific competence at most we could *inferentially* derive from an utterance to the effect that p the fact that it was intended to make us believe that p or the fact that it was prompted by the communicator's own belief that p. But neither of these conclusions when drawn compel *us* the hearers to believe (let alone *know*) that p. Very often when I explicitly recognize the speaker's desire to *get* me to believe something I tend to suspect that p might actually be false. Even if I can infer from the guileless use of a sentence that its original speaker believed what the sentence serves to assert, that is both *more* and *less* than what I wished to account for. When the doctor tells me, "You have a kidney-stone," I very often *know* that I have a kidney-stone. That is obviously *more* than just believing that the doctor believes that I have a kidney-stone because my belief about his belief falls short of my belief about my kidney-stone. The doctor or his current epistemic state is no part of the linguistic meaning of the sentence "You have a kidney-stone" – when it is addressed to me. Hence it is no part of the K. T. that I extract out of it. Of course, I come to know that he believes that from hearing him utter that sentence in a certain serious tone of voice just as I get to know that he can speak English, that he is good at diagnosis, that he does not wish to conceal the nature of my illness from me, etc., by hearing him utter that sentence too. But these are not things that he has let me know by *telling*. The

doctor's telling me that *p* is not to be confused with his telling me that he is telling me that *p* or that he believes that *p*, etc.

This point was succinctly made by Gangeśa in his refutation of the inferential-reductionist accounts of K. T.

4. INFERENCE ABOUT WORDS OR INFERENCE ABOUT THE MEANT ENTITIES?

In order to inferentially extend our knowledge we always need some observationally or otherwise available data or premises to start with. We need a *subject* of inference (not in the sense of the inferring agent) e.g., if we are inferring that the hill has fire, then the hill is our *subject*. We also need a *mark* or *sign* – e.g., in this case smoke which has to be known as connected by the relation of invariable unconditional concommitance (technically known as the rule of *pervasion* in Indian logic) with the property to be inferred (in the example, fire). Nyāya authors after Gangeśa traditionally examine two types of inference-schema proposed by the rival reductionist (the Vaiśeṣika) school, trying to subsume knowledge from honest informed utterences under inference.

Before we proceed to examine these inference-patterns, we have to remember that the dispute is now not regarding the knowledgehood of testimony-based beliefs. Both the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika schools agree (against some Buddhists and materialist skeptics) that words of the reliable can generate knowledge on some occasions. The dispute is about the alleged autonomy of linguistic communication as a method of knowing facts about the world (not only about what the speaker believes). Even a contemporary causal theorist of knowledge whose views come closest to those of Nyāya – eventually reduces utterance-generated knowledge to a two-step inference. Thus Goldman writes:

> Consider next a case of knowledge based on "testimony." This too can be analyzed causally. *p* causes a person *T* to believe *p*, by perception. *T*'s belief of *p* gives rise to (causes) his asserting *p*. *T*'s asserting *p* causes *S*, by auditory perception, to believe that *T* is asserting *p*. *S* infers that *T* believes *p* and from this, in turn, he infers that *p* is a fact . . . – and thus, assuming that each of *S*'s inferences is warrented, *S* can be said to know that *p*. (Goldman, 1978, p. 74)

It is against the above sort of inferential account that I have been trying to argue. It is a false account of our knowledge from hearsay (if we admit

the possibility of such knowledge at all) because such inferences are less often warrented that the knowledge-claims which are allegedly based on them. They also do violence to the directness with which we habitually extract information out of verbal reports.

Somewhat like Goldman above, the Vaiśeṣikas believed that every knowledge-claim must be causally (and epistemically) based on either perception or inference. There just is no third way of coming by knowledge. Suppose the sentence is "Gorbachev has resigned" (uttered by a radio news-reader). My resulting knowledge (upon hearing that utterance) that Gorbachev has resigned has been treated by the Vaiśeṣika epistemologists either as an inference about those English words or as an inference about Gorbachev himself – the man I recall to be the referent of one of the words used in that sentence. What the inference is about is very crucial for the precise formulation of the subject, mark, property-to-be-inferred, pervasion-rule and the example. Once again, to remind ourselves of the paradigm case of a sound inference:

> That hill (= subject)
> has fire (= property-to-be-inferred) in it,
> because, it has smoke (= mark).
> And wherever there is smoke there is fire (= pervasion-rule)
> e.g., the kitchen (= the example).

Accordingly, to formulate the first sort of word-centered inference in the Nyāya logical form:

This sequence of words, viz. "Gorbachev" "has" "resigned" (= the subject)

has – the property of having been uttered due to an awareness (in the speaker) of the purported relation between the purported qualificand (Gorbachev) and the purported qualifier (having resigned) [= the property-to-be-inferred]

because – the words in this sequence are related to each other by contiguity, syntactic and semantic expectancy and fitness of meaning, etc. [= the mark/sign]

like – the similarly connected sequence of words "the cow is white" – uttered by me [= the example].

The last bit, called the example, is added to indicate how instances of the pervasion rule (wherever there is the mark there is the property-to-be-inferred) have been actually observed to support the generalization. (See E 22–23 of Tattvacintāmaṇi in Potter (ed.) 1992.)

Much depends upon how we interepret these crucial features of expectancy and fitness which are technical concepts belonging to Indian philosophy of language. A word is said to expect another word if they are 'made for each other' to generate a unified sentence-meaning; if, that is, the utterance of any one of them generates an inquiry in the auditor's mind which is best answered by the utterance of the other. This psychologistic definition of expectancy, however, has been rejected in the final analysis in favour of a rather complicated syntactic-semantic definition. But we do not wish to enter into those intricacies at this point. The rough idea is this: "John beats the cow with a stick" is a sequence of mutually expectant words, unlike – the sequence "John beating cow stick" which arranges meaningful words but in a non-dovetailed fashion! Interestingly enough, we can't substitute for a well-formed sentence the set of nominalized forms of the analysis of each word's meaning! Thus, while the meaning of the above sentence (that is, what is said to be known by anyone who gets informed by it) is regimented as follows: John has agency towards an act of beating of which the instrument is a stick and the accusative is a cow, yet to utter the sequence of words "A cow, accusativeness, beating, instrumentality, stick, agency, John" – will be to produce a sentence lacking in expectancy. Of course, mere expectancy is not enough; to be informative the sentence must have fitness. The notion of fitness is another complicated and controversial notion (see Chakrabarti, 1986, for a critical discussion). Strictly speaking, it is a feature of the meant entities and only indirectly of the words. It is sometimes understood as mere compatibility of meanings because the stock example of an unfit sentence is: "Wet with fire" (that the subject is missing is not the problem, for even the sentence "Mary wets the kitchen with fire" – will be equally unfit). Wetting and fire obviously are incompatible. But more strictly defined as "lack of known contradiction," fitness really requires that the hearer does not know the opposite of what is said to be the case. If I already know for sure that *a* is not *f*, then I shall find the statement that *a* is *f* initially implausable. Perhaps fitness is best understood as plausibility. We can imaginatively understand an implausible utterance but we cannot come to believe that things are thus and so from such an implausible utterance. Now to come back

to the proposed inference: Just on the basis of mutual expectancy we cannot with any inductive strength infer that the utterance of the words is caused by the speaker's belief – let along true belief – that Gorbachev has resigned. The news-reader might be just parroting, that is, mechanically reading out a script. A liar or an unbelieving repeater of words can utter a perfectly well-formed sequence of mutually expectant words without believing a word of it. Thus the pervasion rule fails. If we take the notion of fitness in the strong sense – then, of course, the inference may go through because such fitness is indistinguishable from the factual truth of the content (how else can we establish that what the speaker said is definitely not known to be false except by knowing it to be true?). But then the inference becomes circular. We would then have to first establish that the man Gorbachev is not known to have not resigned before we can be informed that he has resigned.

Finally, even if the inference can be made to work – what it will deliver us will fall short of our desideratum. Notice the conclusion of the inference: Those words must have been caused by the speaker's belief that Gorbachev has resigned. Even if we are furnished with this knowledge do we therefore know that Gorbachev has resigned? In answering 'no' to this last question, Gangeśa anticipates the problem of referential opacity of intentional contexts. In order to attribute false belief to you, I don't have to be a false-believer myself. If I did, then God in his omniscience would share our errors because he knows that we have them. Although Sanskrit grammar does not have the provision for a clearly indirect context (a 'that'-clause) so that it makes all belief-attributing sentences look like *de re* contexts, it was obvious to Gangeśa that *A* does not come to believe that *p* if *A* thinks that *B* believes that *p*. Therefore, the hearer's inferring about the words that they are generated by the speaker's belief that *p* is not sufficient for the hearer's belief that *p*.

Let us pass on now to the other type of inference, namely, where the meant entities themselves figure as subjects or places where some relevant properties are inferred.

Take the sentence: "John is ill." This generates in any one who has mastery over English, who knows who this John is, and who does not question the credibility of the speaker, the belief that John is ill. Is this belief inferentially obtained? Could it be an inference about John (whom the hearer has seen before and now is reminded of by the utterance of his name), an inference to the effect that he has the property of illness

(so, the predicated property will be the inferable and John will be the place or subject of inference)?

What will serve as the mark or ground for such an inference? Obviously, we have nothing to go by except some features of the words or the sentence as heard and interpreted by the speaker. But the features of the words like contiguity, expectancy, etc., could not be marks, because the marks and the inferable must be capable of residing in the same locus; at least, the mark should be believed to reside in the subject of inference. But features like contiguity or expectancy are syntactic and semantic features of the utterances which can't be looked for in John or any of the meant entities. So the mark will be "unestablished," hence essentially faulty. In response to the above difficulty we could somehow manipulate the mark so that this defect of unavailability in the place of inference does not vitiate it. We could dress up the inference as follows:

> John (= the place or the subject)
>
> has illness (= the property to be inferred)
>
> Because, he is recalled by the word "John" in a sequence of word's where the other words "is ill" meaning what they do expect the word "John" (= the mark). Whenever in a sentence words standing for the property *f* expect a word standing for the object *a*, in reality *a* has *f* (= the pervasion-rule).

But surely the pervasion-rule is too generous. In the sequence "Gorbachev is back in power" words do expect each other but we do not thereby know that Gorbachev is back in power. So mere expectancy will not do as a mark. To tighten up this inference into a sound form we have to add the semantic feature of "fitness" of the meant entities – once again, because we can never validly infer the actual obtaining of the state of affairs reported by an utterance by merely arguing on the basis of syntactic or grammatical features of the utterance. But to know that the sentence "John is ill" has the semantic feature of fitness is to know that John in not known to be non-ill which could be established only by the knowledge that John is indeed ill. Once we presuppose knowledge of such a semantically strengthened mark, we shall actually assume, within the premises of the inference, a prior knowledge of the truth of the conclusion, thus rendering all knowledge from testimony into

re-knowing of the already known. The inferences become epistemicaly circular and the essential freshness of testimonial knowledge is lost.

The same circularity, we have already seen, will damage the inference if we make the trustworthiness of the speaker a premise. Because as Jagadīśa (a post-Gaṅgeśa 16th-century logician) remarks (verse 5 of 'Śabdaśaktiprakāśikā')

Being told by a trustworthy speaker, especially when the trustworthiness is specified with regard to the specific sentence-meaning – cannot be required as a known factor (a premise), because many sentence-meanings which are learnt were never apprehended before and because awareness of a connected meaning arises even when one is in doubt as to the trustworthiness of the speaker.

One essential feature of inferential knowledge is that certainty about the mark's existence must be there before the conclusion is arrived at. Now if having been uttered by a person who has personally acquired knowledge that *p* – is taken as a mark, then before we can infer that *p* we have to know that the speaker has personally known that *p*, which will render the inference pretty useless. Thus it is shown that the project of reducing K. T. to an inference is hopeless. What Reid had called the twin principles of veracity (of tellers) and credulity (of listeners) are presuppositions of human communication on which even the liar and the disbelieving or suspicious listener have to rely to some extent. Wittgenstein said in a suggestive manner: "For how can a child immediately doubt what it is taught? That could mean only that he was incapable of learning certain language-games." (On Certainty, #283). The same insight has been formulated by John McDowell in more clearly anti-reductionist language:

It seems unpromising to suppose that knowledge by hearsay owes its status as knowledge quite generally to the knower's *possessing a cogent argument* to the truth of what he knows from the supposed reliability of the speaker. [my emphasis] (McDowell 1980, p. 135)

Surely the speaker has to be in fact telling the truth and normally also speaking from his own knowledge, but we could not be expected to first *ascertain* reliability indirectly or otherwise in order to procure knowledge from his say-so.

It is from the speaker's presumed responsibility for the truth of his utterance that the hearer's right to be sure stems, and that is what comes out explicitly when the hearer is asked to justify, at the second reflective level, why she claims to know that Venice is beautiful simply by

being told so by a friend. It is not past experience and generalizations therefrom which teaches us to trust and be informed by other people's committed reports (in fact, experience rather teaches us to be suspicious and circumspect!). Sensitivity to the prereflective duty to communicate and share knowledge and the corresponding right to trust form part of that very linguistic competence by using which we can then proceed to tell and appreciate fabricated stories, unasserted hypotheses, etc. The Nyāya philosophers had an elaborate theory of our beliefless understanding of jokes, poetic statements, antecedents of counterfactual conditionals, and statements which I interpret in order to enjoy or refute. Such understanding could not even count as 'word-generated awareness' – in the strict sense. It would be called 'make-believe awareness' or a sort of imaginative granting. But just because we can be tongue-in-cheek while interpreting fellow speakers of a language it is perverse to suppose that the standard case of knowledge-transmission through speech has to be an inferential process of adding assent to a content which is initally grasped without belief. That no such inferential process of adding weighed assent can quite capture our actual practice of division of epistemic labour (described by Hardwig, 1985) is not the only problem with the two-step theory of K. T. which I am opposing. What do I know when I merely understand a statement without believing in it? In answer to this question, the two-step theory volunteers some version of the standard answer: we know a proposition, a truth-condition, a Fregean thought, or a representational content. Commitment to (or embarassment with) some such entity seems to be a natural, if not inevitable, metaphysical baggage which comes with the two-step theory. Now, Nyāya – as a system of thought – is not at all nominalistic. Abstract universals and even some unrepeatable qualities which could qualify as abstract particulars are accommodated in its ontology with a lot of enthusiasm. In virtue of my knowing a fruit as an apple relational properties like "qualifierhood" can also be admitted to emerge in the objective apple out there in the world. Yet it avoids intentional entities like interpersonally shared objective contents of false beliefs, or even for that matter, of true beliefs. Somewhat like Russell's account of falsity in *The Problems of Philosophy*, the *Nyāya* theory of false belief avoids positing propositions by letting individual cognitive episodes assign roles of qualificants and qualifiers to items which are equally real (out there) but which do not actually qualify one another. If I understand your sentence correctly,

but the sentence is false, the Nyāya philosopher does not feel constrained to say that I have come to know or apprehend a false proposition, because there are no false propositions. How then do they account for word-generated error? This is a complicated issue. I shall briefly discuss this in the last section of the paper.

But we must distinguish between understanding and word-generated knowledge. Bhattacharya (1977) fails to draw this basic distinction, having been misled by the word "Śābdabodha" which can colloquially mean: grasping the intended meaning of words. When Nyāya uses that expression it simply means *knowledge from words* which is the standard case, i.e., knowledge that *p* gathered from someone's asserting that *p*.) The distinction is not drawn in terms of truth or falsity or correctness or incorrectness. There is no tendency in *Nyāya* to hold that word-generated awareness is always knowledge. We can have false belief generated by believingly comprehended false sentences. The contents of such false beliefs are neatly explained by the general Nyāya technique of assigning mis-allocated intentional roles to bits of the real world, without postulating Fregean false thoughts or Moorean propositions as nonactual floating targets of shared false beliefs or any such twilight entities! Even such false beleifs are word-generated beliefs. So the problem is not with false awareness of contents but with *unbelieving* awareness of content. Even for one special sort of unbelieving awareness of contents which may result from a sentence known by the hearer to be semantically unfit, i.e., patently false – Nyāya has an account. This is the notion of a conniving or mock-awareness which is exploited in giving an account of our interpretation of fanciful tales or our attitude towards a contention which we are going to refute. Fitness is no longer a condition, rather a firm awareness of unfitness causes such fictional apprehension of unfit contents. But it seems really like a *lacuna* in Nyāya philosophy of language (somewhat compensated by the Grammarian philosophers who were happier to suppose such intentional entities with ontologically emaciated status corresponding to empty terms or false sentences) that nothing like a propositional content is even admitted to serve as the object of a belief-free grasp of the meaning of a sentence. It has been almost uncontroversially established in Western epistemology and philosophy of language that we must grasp the content before judging the content to be true. Although Frege himself drew our attention repeatedly to the informational vacuity of the adjective "true" so that knowing that *p* and knowing that *p* is true would always collapse to the same thing,

it was he who insisted upon a distinction between the three acts of: (1) apprehension of a thought-content, (2) judging it to be true, and (3) asserting it to be true. More recently, Gareth Evans has explicitly formulated the principle of *belief-independence of informational states.* To quote:

> the subject's being in an informational state is independent of whether or not he believes that the state is verdical.

But the examples that he gives are of illusions and false impressions which persist even after clear recognition of or firm belief in the non-veridicality of the experience. It is unclear, however, how without positing ontological entities like Fregean *thoughts* or *propositions* (subsisting but not existing) – one can call such states, states of *knowledge*. If such unbelieving understanding is called knowledge (and sometimes it is said that such knowledge is more definitely and directly obtainable from bearing sentences in a familiar language than *knowledge of the fact* reported in the sentence) then what is it a knowledge of? To answer that it is the *knowledge of meaning* gets us nowhere. What is that unified meaning in the case of a false sentence? If we want to retain our robust sense of reality then we can't claim to have knowledge of some entities called 'meanings' without *believing* that such meanings are there in the world for us to know them. To still insist, that the being there of the meant content does not constitute the existence of the fact which the sentence would have pictured if it were true is to be left with only one alternative apart from the unpalatable Fregean third realm of senses; viz. Wittgenstein's Tractarian notion of states of affairs which might or might not exist.

I am myself very much inclined to do justice to what Evans calls the "most subtle and complicated phenomenon" of the ontologically non-committal language-games of giving and receiving information without the full load of belief in their reality. Yet it seems unavoidable to have the believing awareness of content as the *standard* and *normal* case, and build our theories of unbelieving understanding (e.g., of jokes or fictional sentences) *derivatively* upon them. To make an account of a normal, serious, information-instilling use of language necessarily go through this murky state of belief-free presentation of contents (when we don't know where in our ontology to accommodate such floating contents) seems to be inviting obfuscation! I am sure that we do

unbelievingly understand a lot of utterances but it is "too much" to argue that all knowledge of facts through testimony has to go through this noncommittal state of belief-free information intake.

It is only when we have a two-step theory like the one I have been arguing against that we tend to treat the end-belief of the credulous audience as inferential, and often inadequately warranted at that. Interestingly enough, Fricker calls the so-called second step (coming to believe that the grasped content is actually the case) the *first-level-hearer's belief*. Her notion of *second-level-hearer's belief* is, of course, different from that of understanding; it is not belief-free. It is a belief, not about the world, but about the speech-act performed by the speaker. Nyāya will have no trouble with that. Surely when I hear you utter a sentence, I perceptually recognize that you have made an assertion with a certain content. This could be perception. I can also make an inference from this to the effect that you *want* to tell me something by the use of that sentence. But this is not what Nyāya would mean by "*word*-generated knowledge" because your words didn't say "I am making an assertion that . . . " or "I want to make you believe that . . . ". To be *informed* by your assertion is to believe that what you *assert* is the *case*.

And this belief can turn out to be *knowledge* when the assertion is true and my apprehension of it follows the intention of the speaker and the grammatical and lexical rules of interpretation of that language. To still cling to the view that my (2nd level) knowledge that an assertion has been made (etc.) is somehow securer and better justified than my claimed knowledge that what is asserted is the case is to succumb to the sceptical pressure (which Fricker does on p. 160 of her unpublished Oxford doctoral dissertation on Epistemology of Testimony) *that all intelligible speech could be consistently and systematically taken as false.* Thus Fricker draws the corollary from her *inferential* account of first-level hearer's beliefs (the Nyāya *Śābdabodha*). "That it is perfectly coherent to suppose an individual who understands others' utterances perfectly, and yet never believes what they say." She goes on to say that such an individual would indeed be 'odd'. But I find this word of disapproval rather misleadingly mild. I am inclined to think with Davidson that 'too much actual error robs a person of things to go wrong about' and conclude that such uniform unbelief would deprive the distrustful interpreter of even his capacity to interpret correctly. The work of constructing an alternative account of K. T. which does not lapse

into a defense of blind trust, does full justice to trustless comprehension, and yet does not promote a realm of senses between words and the world is far from finished. But if we have to disabuse ourselves of the kind of arrogant epistemological individualism which encourages one to respect others' judgments only insofar as one has personally verified their reliability – we must come up with such a non-reductionist account of knowledge from other's words.

To recognize K. T.'s *in*dependence in this way will be to modestly recognize our *dependence* on each other in the joint venture of enhancing that total stock of what *we* know together.

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ELIZABETH FRICKER

AGAINST GULLIBILITY

1.

One main school in the Indian classical tradition of philosophy insists that testimony – 'learning from words' – is a source or type of knowledge *sui generis*, one which cannot be reduced to any other type – not to perception, memory, or inference nor, we may add, to combinations of these. Such an irreducibility thesis could take diverse specific forms. One form it may take is as the thesis that a hearer has a presumptive epistemic right to trust an arbitrary speaker. We may essay an initial formulation of this thesis thus:

> *PR thesis*: On any occasion of testimony, the hearer has the epistemic right to assume, without evidence, that the speaker is trustworthy, i.e. that what she says will be true, unless there are special circumstances which defeat this presumption. (Thus she has the epistemic right to believe the speaker's assertion, unless such defeating conditions obtain.)

The claim that there is such a special presumptive right (PR) to trust associated with testimony constitutes a kind of irreducibility thesis, since the hearer's right to believe what she is told, on this view, stems from a special normative epistemic principle pertaining to testimony, and is not a piece of common-or-garden inductively based empirical inference.

Testimony's alleged status as a special source of knowledge is underlined if this PR thesis is conjoined with a negative claim, which we may formulate initially thus:

> *NC*: It is not, generally speaking, possible for a hearer to obtain independent confirmation that a given speaker is trustworthy – that what she says will be true.

If this Negative Claim is true, then knowledge can regularly be gained through testimony only if there is no need for independent confirma-

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 125–161.

tion of the trustworthiness of speakers; that is, if the PR thesis holds. So the existence of this special normative epistemic principle is then essential to the gaining of knowledge through testimony. This pair of claims together is one apt explication of the irreducibility thesis of the Nyaya school of Indian philosophy.[1]

In this paper I shall give one half of a refutation of the PR thesis, by arguing against the Negative Claim, which features as a premise in one central argument for it. My discussion also shows the prima facie case against a PR. A fuller treatment would also consider, and reject, various positive arguments for a PR which may be made, which appeal to the essential nature of language, and of understanding, arguing that these imply that a general disposition to trust is essential to language, and thence to its epistemic legitimacy. Here I can only record my view that no such argument succeeds.

The Negative Claim that there can, generally speaking, be no non-circular confirmation that a given speaker is trustworthy, is false. And any fully competent participant in the social institution of a natural language simply knows too much about the characteristic role of the speaker, and the possible gaps which may open up between a speaker's making an assertion, and what she asserts being so, to want to form beliefs in accordance with the policy a PR allows. The PR thesis is an epistemic charter for the gullible and undiscriminating. This paper argues against gullibility.

2.

To say that testimony is a special source, or yields a special kind, of knowledge, could mean many things. I shall not here take it to mean that testimony constitutes an exception to an otherwise fully general, over-arching conception of knowledge. I take it that its showing knowledge to be, at some level of description, one kind of thing, albeit acquired in different ways, is an adequacy condition on an account of the concept. Such an overarching conception might be causalist or reliabilist. But I favour a justificationist conception, on which a subject's being able to defend her belief appropriately is a necessary condition for it to be knowledge.[2] The claim that testimony is an irreducible source of knowledge will not then emerge as a counter-example to the thesis that knowledge requires appropriate justification, but as a claim about what kind of justification is required for a testimony belief.[3]

The PR thesis is such a claim. It is a normative epistemic principle, amounting to the thesis that a hearer has the epistemic right to believe what she observes an arbitrary speaker to assert, just on the ground that it has been asserted: she need not attempt any assessment of the likelihood that this speaker's assertions about their subject matter will be true, nor modify her disposition to believe according to such an assessment. A corollary of the PR thesis is thus that a hearer gives a fully adequate justification of her belief just by citing the fact that "Someone told me so". This simple defence does not need supplementation with evidence for the trustworthiness of her informant. Nor, on this view, does an ordinary hearer need to supplement the simple defence by invoking the PR thesis itself. That thesis is formulated by the philosopher, as a theoretical registering of the fact that the simple defence is all that is needed.

The PR thesis is not to be confused with a descriptive premise that 'speakers mainly tell the truth.' The view that belief in what is asserted is justified by reference to such a descriptive premiss, cited as part of the first-level justification of the belief, is a quite different view, one which would constitute a reduction of knowledge from testimony to an ordinary case of inductively based inferential knowledge. The alleged descriptive premiss (whether claimed to be empirically confirmed fact, or a priori conceptual truth about language) might be invoked in an attempted philosophical argument for the PR thesis. But this is entirely different from its featuring among the premisses which an ordinary hearer must know and be able to cite, to justify her belief.

Our target is the PR thesis. Arguments for it fall into two kinds: the positive arguments from the essential nature of language already mentioned, and a negative argument. This last is a transcendental argument which runs thus:

(1) Knowledge can be and frequently is gained by means of testimony;

(2) [NC] It is not, generally speaking, possible for a hearer to obtain independent confirmation that a given speaker is trustworthy; therefore

(3) There is knowledge gained by testimony only if there is a presumptive right on the part of any hearer to trust an arbitrary speaker; therefore

(4) There is such a presumptive right to trust.[4]

One might reject this argument by rejecting its initial premiss. This is not my strategy. I agree with the proponent of the argument that it is

a constraint on any epistemology of testimony, that it preserve our commonsense view that knowledge can be gained through testimony. This paper is devoted to stopping the transcendental argument by showing its second premise, the Negative Claim, to be false.

3.

The epistemological 'problem of justifying belief through testimony' is the problem of showing how it can be the case that a hearer on a particular occasion has the epistemic right to believe what she is told – to believe a particular speaker's assertion. If an account showing that and how this is possible is given, then the epistemological problem of testimony has been solved.

The solution can take either of two routes. It may be shown that the required step – from '*S* asserted that *P*'[5] to '*P*' – can be made as a piece of inference involving only familiar deductive and inductive principles, applied to empirically established premisses. Alternatively, it may be argued that the step is legitimised as the exercise of a special presumptive epistemic right to trust, not dependent on evidence.

The Negative Claim, when appropriately glossed, is equivalent to the thesis that the first, *reductionist*, route to justifying testimony is closed. The gloss in question is to fix the notion of a speaker's 'trustworthiness' programmatically, as precisely that property of a speaker which would, if empirically established, allow the inference (using only standard principles) to the truth of what she has asserted. As we saw above, the *anti-reductionist* about testimony argues from the alleged closedness of the first route, to the conclusion that the second route *must* be open: to the existence of a special presumptive epistemic right to trust.

It is important to be clear that the only genuine epistemological problem is the one stated above. There is no 'problem of justifying belief through testimony' over and above the task of showing that particular instances of testimony can be such as to be justifiedly believed.[6] The anti-reductionist's case, I shall show, gains most of its plausibility from confusion over just what the problem to be solved is.

Before we can consider whether the 'trustworthiness' of particular speakers can be non-circularly confirmed, and so whether the reductive route to justifying testimony is open, we need to determine just what this property is best taken to be. The first requirement on an

explication of this notion is that it serve the purpose in hand: it must be a property of the speaker *S* knowledge of which suffices, for a hearer *H* on an occasion *O*, to bridge the logical and epistemic gap between '*S* asserted that *P*', and '*P*'.[7] That is to say, if *H* knows that *S* asserted that *P* on *O*, and she also knows that *S* is 'trustworthy' on *O*, then she has a basis justifiedly to believe that *P*. Equally (subject to a desideratum explained below), 'trustworthiness' should be no stronger than whatever property of *S* it takes to bridge this gap, on particular occasions. If *H* can know that *S* possesses this weakest gap-bridging property on an occasion *O*, this is enough to justify her in believing that *S* asserts on *O*; thus it is only this weakest gap-bridging property which must admit of non-circular confirmation, to provide a reductive solution to the problem of justifying testimony, as we have conceived it. We may also hope that our explication will answer to the intuitive notion of 'trustworthiness' of a speaker. It should do so, since the intuitive notion has to it precisely this flavour of 'that which warrants belief in the speaker's testimony on an occasion'.

Precisely what trustworthiness, thus programmatically identified, is best taken to be, is spelled out in §7. But we may note here a second theoretical desideratum on our explication.

We may aspire to give a systematic general account of how knowledge (justified true belief) is gained through testimony; or more strictly: of how a subject's belief may be justified in virtue of its support from testimony. And this account may be conceived as having the following form: A specification of a set $\mathcal{T}$ of sentence-schemata which *characterise* cases of knowledge through testimony in the sense: *A* hearer *H* has an adequate basis for a true belief of hers to count as justified, in virtue of its support from a certain speaker's testimony, just when she has knowledge whose content is given by instances, appropriate to the content of her belief, and her situation, of each member of the set $\mathcal{T}$.[8]

Clearly, a first component of $\mathcal{T}$ will be:

T_1: '*S* asserted that *P* on *O*'.

That T_1 is a necessary component of the set $\mathcal{T}$ (whose members represent a jointly sufficient condition for justified belief) is the hallmark of $\mathcal{T}$'s representing what it is for a subject's belief to be justified by, inter alia, evidence from testimony.

And surely it is the notion of trustworthiness, explicated in accordance

with the constraints suggested above, that will furnish the second premise of the desired characteristic set $\mathcal{T}$? This is indeed so, if we gloss what it is for trustworthiness to 'bridge the gap' between T_1 and '*P*' appropriately. But we need to be careful about just what this amounts to.

An account which renders perspicuous what is going on in the acquisition of knowledge through testimony must separate out, in *H*'s total evidence for '*P*', two different strands: The independent evidence for '*P*' which *H* already has; and the evidence for '*P*' which *H* gets, given what she knows about *S*, from the fact that *S* has asserted it. Effecting this separation is essential, if we are to be able to model what goes on in a 'Humean collision' – that is, a situation where the prima facie evidence for '*P*' from a trustworthy speaker's testimony clashes with strong evidence from other sources against '*P*'.[9] Now specifying a truly characteristic set $\mathcal{T}$ will indeed achieve this separation. But specifying one is not so easy, because for $\mathcal{T} = (T_1, T_2)$ to be characteristic, it is not sufficient, although we may take it as necessary, that the T_1 we choose be such that T_1 and T_2 together entail '*P*'.[10]

We want our account to separate the two strands in *H*'s evidence for '*P*'. And this implies a further desideratum on $\mathcal{T}$: its elements should be *epistemically independent of 'P'*, a notion I define thus: No element *T* of $\mathcal{T}$ must be such that *H* can know *T* to be true in virtue of knowing that *P* and knowing true the other elements of $\mathcal{T}$. This means that '*P*'-plus-the-rest-of-$\mathcal{T}$ must not together entail *T*, nor constitute strong evidence for it.

If $\mathcal{T}$ contains a *T* which is not epistemically independent of '*P*', then a situation is possible in which *H* knows that *P*, and knows that which is specified by all the elements of $\mathcal{T}$, which is not a situation in which she has knowledge that *P* through *S*'s testimony; rather, it is one in which the direction of epistemic dependence is the reverse: not: *H* knows that *P*, in virtue of knowing all the elements of $\mathcal{T}$, but: *H* knows *T* in virtue of independently knowing that *P*, and knowing the rest of $\mathcal{T}$. Such a $\mathcal{T}$ fails to *characterise* cases of knowledge through testimony.

This desideratum that the elements of $\mathcal{T}$ all be epistemically independent of *P* further constrains the choice of T_2.[11] It rules out choosing the material conditional 'If *S* asserts that *P* on *O*, then *P*'. This looks like the right choice if we consider only our first requirement, for it is the weakest premise which one can add to '*S* asserted that *P* on *O*', to get a pair which together entail '*P*'. But it is ruled out by our second desideratum, because it is itself entailed by '*P*', and so *H* is in a position

to know it whenever she knows that *P*.[12] If she also knows that *S* has asserted that *P*, then she knows the set $\mathcal{T}$, on this choice of its elements. But she may have no grounds whatsoever for thinking that the material conditional holds of *S*, other than her knowledge that '*P*' is true. This is not a situation in which she has a basis to know that *P on the strength of S's testimony*. On the contrary, it is one exhibiting the reverse epistemic direction. Of course, a situation is *also* possible in which *H* knows that the material conditional holds of *S not* through knowing that *P*, but in virtue of knowing something genuinely about *S*, the intuitive property of 'trustworthiness'. In such a case, she does have knowledge which is based on *S*'s testimony. The trouble with choosing the material conditional as T_2, is that the mere fact that *S* knows the resulting $\mathcal{T}$ does not reveal which of these situations obtains.

The same is true of '*S* asserted truly that *P*': it too fails the test of epistemic independence of '*P*'. The epistemic direction of knowledge through testimony obtains, when *H* knows that '*S* asserted truly that *P*' in virtue of knowing that *S* asserted that *P*, and knowing something genuinely *about S* – namely, that *S* is 'trustworthy'. Here, *H* has knowledge that *P* in virtue of *S*'s testimony to it. The reverse epistemic direction obtains, when she knows that *S*'s assertion that *P* was true only because she already knows that *P*. Here *S*'s testimony adds no further support to '*P*' for *H*. In requiring that the elements of $\mathcal{T}$ be epistemically independent of '*P*', our idea is precisely to find a $\mathcal{T}$ such that its identity is in itself enough to ensure that the direction of epistemic dependence is always the first, and not the second – i.e. that $\mathcal{T}$ is a characteristic set.

('*S* asserted truly that *P*' is not a suitable choice for T_2 for other reasons too: it entails '*P*' by itself, while we want a premise which does so only together with T_1; and in fact, predicating truth of *S*'s assertion is an inessential intermediate step, which we can skip, in identifying *H*'s shortest inferential route from '*S* asserted that *P*' to '*P*' – c.f. the proposal eventually adopted below).

In describing the direction of epistemic dependence that we want to isolate, I have just employed as a primitive the intuitive notion of *S*'s 'trustworthiness' which we are supposed to be explicating. But the notion we are groping towards is not doomed to remain an indispensable primitive. We can draw a useful moral from what is wrong with the material conditional. The trouble, in the first instance, is that it is not epistemically independent of '*P*'. But this is a symptom of the fact that any

instance of the predicate-schema 'If _ asserts that *P* on *O*, then *P*', while it is grammatically predicable of *S*, does not represent a genuine property of *S*. This last is an intuitive notion we need not attempt to define here; we need only note that a genuine property of *S*, unlike the material conditional, will not be something which holds of *S* in a world, merely in virtue of the fact that '*P*' is true in that world. A hallmark of a genuine property of *S*, in short, is that (special cases apart) it will be epistemically independent of '*P*'. To effect the desired separation of the two strands in *H*'s evidence for '*P*', we must find, as our explication of 'trustworthiness', such a genuine property of *S*, one such that whether *S* possesses the property in a world is a matter of what *S* herself is like. Special cases apart, when 'trustworthiness' is so explicated, situations in which *H* knows that *P*, and knows that *S* asserted that *P*, and that *S* is trustworthy, will be precisely those in which, intuitively, we would judge that *H* has support for '*P*' from *S*'s testimony; and, flukes apart. *H*'s evidence confirming *S*'s trustworthiness will be disjoint from her evidence confirming '*P*'.

To find such a notion: which just suffices, together with '*S* asserted that *P* on *O*', to entail '*P*'; which constitutes a genuine property of *S*, hence, flukes and special cases apart, is epistemically independent of '*P*'; and which constitutes an explication of the intuitive notion of *S*'s being trustworthy on an occasion of testimony, is our aspiration. A first approximation is the property of *S* specified by the subjunctive conditional:

> *Trus1*: 'If *S* were to assert that *P* on *O*, then it would be the case that *P*.'

This bridges the gap and is, special subject matters apart, epistemically independent of '*P*'.[13] Knowing it to hold of *S* will, generally speaking, require having knowledge about *S* herself – her character, circumstances, etc. In fact, as we shall see in §7, the property of *S* specified by this subjunctive conditional is slightly stronger than the choice for T_2 which best fulfils our requirements. We will see there also that the best explication of *S*'s trustworthiness makes it relative not just to an occasion and an assertion-content, but to a particular utterance *U* by *S*. I shall adopt this relativisation from now on, although it is only in our final explication that it is not idle. It is in any case apt, since it is only with respect to her actual utterance that *H* ***needs*** to know that *S* is trustworthy.

4.

Our final explication of 'trustworthiness', and detailed account of how it can be empirically confirmed by a hearer, occupies §§7, 8. But we have enough, armed with the provisional suggestion Trus1, to make some initial points regarding our central concern: the question whether the trustworthiness of a speaker can sometimes be empirically confirmed, so that the reductionist route from '*S* asserted that *P*' to '*P*' is open. The reductionist must make good the following claim (of which, accordingly, the anti-reductionist's Negative Claim is to be construed as the denial):

Local Reductionist Claim: It can be the case that,[14] on a particular occasion *O* when a speaker *S* makes an utterance *U* and in doing so asserts that *P* to a hearer *H*, *H* has, or can gain, independent evidence sufficient to warrant her in taking *S* to be trustworthy with respect to *U*.

(Notice that to appeal to one's independent knowledge of the truth of what is asserted by a speaker's utterance, as evidence for her trustworthiness with respect to it, is not circular; but neither is it a case of possible knowledge through testimony. As we saw above, for just this reason our preferred explication of *S*'s trustworthiness with respect to *U* will not be such that merely knowing the truth of what is asserted by means of *U* is sufficient to establish it. Nonetheless, many instances of independent confirmation of the truth of what a certain speaker asserts provide inductive grounds to attribute a more general trustworthiness to her, as she builds up a track record of independently confirmed accuracy – see below.)

The reduction here claimed is only 'local'. That is to say, the claim is only that there can be occasions when a hearer has evidence that the *particular* speaker in question is to be trusted with respect to her *current* utterance, without assuming this very fact. I shall call the question whether this local reductionist claim is true the 'local question' about testimony. The conception of the epistemological problem of justifying testimony adopted in §3 implies that a local reduction is all we need aspire to, or hope for. A 'reductionist' account of knowledge through testimony, in the context of this approach, means such a local reduction of each instance of knowledge through testimony to broader categories of knowledge, and patterns of inference.

Thus on our conception of the problem, justifying testimony by the reductionist route does not, at least in the first instance, require showing that the blanket generalisation, 'Testimony is generally reliable', (or, more simply, 'Most assertions are true') can be non-circularly empirically established. Such globally independent confirmation of the veracity of testimony would require that a hearer have evidence that *most of what she has ever learned through testimony is true*, where this evidence does not in any way rest on knowledge acquired by her through testimony. The fact that such a *global reduction* is not required for it, is crucial to the local reductionist position I argue for in this paper. For, as I readily agree with the anti-reductionist, there are general reasons, stemming from the essential role of simply-trusted testimony in the causal process by which an infant develops into the possessor of a shared language and conception of the world, why the prospects for a global reduction seem hopeless. So *this* negative claim is correct; but beside the present point. Notice therefore how the plausibility of the transcendental argument evaporates, once we identify just what the relevant Negative Claim is. For then we see how modest are the possibilities of non-circular confirmation which it denies, but which are all that is required, for knowledge through testimony to be possible in the absence of a presumptive right to trust.

True, the local reductionist question would transform itself into the global one, if it were the case that the only way of showing that a given speaker was trustworthy with respect to an utterance, was via appeal to the blanket generalisation. But, I suggest, this is not so. The blanket generalisation is actually neither sufficient nor necessary evidence to justify belief, on a particular occasion, that *this* speaker is trustworthy with respect to *this* utterance of hers, which is what it takes to justify belief in what she has thereby asserted.[15] Even if the generalisation were true, there could be circumstances surrounding particular utterances which rendered the speaker's trustworthiness with respect to them doubtful in spite of it. And typically the grounds, when there are such, for expecting a speaker to be trustworthy with respect to a particular utterance of hers, relate to the circumstances and character of the speaker, and the nature of her subject matter; they do not concern the generality of assertoric utterances at all.

More prima facie plausible is the claim that the only ground a hearer could ever have for believing a speaker to be trustworthy with respect

to a particular utterance, would be knowledge on her part that that particular speaker is *generally* trustworthy, at least about that kind of thing. Certainly we very often do, quite reasonably, rely on, or distrust, particular individual's testimony on precisely such grounds. But such generalisations about a particular speaker very often *can* be established non-circularly (which amounts to: without reliance on any testimony from that speaker). One means (though not the only, nor the central one, as we shall see in §8) is the approved Humean fashion, induction from observed constant conjunction – we trust one person's report, because she has built up a track record of accuracy; we distrust another because she has accumulated the opposite. And anyway, knowledge of a speaker's general trustworthiness is not the only possible ground for believing her trustworthy with respect to a particular utterance, nor is it always sufficient: someone may be notoriously inaccurate about many things, but one can still reasonably expect her to be right about such elementary matters as what she had for breakfast, or whether she has a headache, or whether a familiar object is on a table in front of her. Conversely, certain circumstances and subject matters provide grounds to expect a generally trustworthy person to be less than reliable – a matter in which she is emotionally involved; something notoriously tricky; when she has been in deceptive or inadequately informing circumstances.

(Note, however, that the prima facie incredibility of what a speaker asserts by an utterance is *not* best treated as evidence against her trustworthiness with respect to it. As explained earlier, we need to separate the evidence for '*P*' stemming from the fact that it has been asserted by a trustworthy speaker, from other evidence for or against '*P*'. Where these conflict, there will ensure a Humean battle between them in the belief-updating processes of a rational hearer. To represent this battle most perspicuously, it is the *ex ante* estimate of the trustworthiness of a speaker that we should take; not one revised downwards in the light of her prima facie incredible utterance.)

Anti-reductionism about testimony looks plausible if reductionism is so construed as to involve commitment to the claim that the blanket generalisation can be non-circularly established.[16] But my 'local' reductionist can happily grant that this is impossible. There is no need to show that the blanket generalisation can be non-circularly established, in order to show that a hearer can earn herself the right to trust a speaker on an occasion, without needing the gift of a PR; thereby providing a

reductionist solution to the only epistemological problem of testimony which needs to be solved, viz. the local problem.

There is no space in the present paper to consider the reasons why the project of non-circularly confirming the global generalisation is hopeless, nor to defend my view that this does not undermine the rationale for insisting on justification severally for beliefs acquired through testimony. So I shall simply state my views. My view of the global 'problem' about testimony is that it is not a problem. The project of trying simultaneously to justify all of our beliefs which rest in any way on testimony (or equally, to justify a single testimony-belief, but without appealing to any beliefs based on testimony) is not one that is properly embarked on, and we certainly do not need to seek to found these beliefs as a totality in something else. The desire to show that the blanket generalisation can be non-circularly established is an instance of the foundationalist yearning to provide credentials for our system of beliefs from outside that system, or from a privileged subset of it. In this instance this task would be to hive off the part of our belief-system which rests, inter alia, on testimony, and show that it can be 'founded' in the remainder which is not. My insistence that the local question is the only legitimate question about testimony is of a piece with a more general coherentist approach in epistemology. Insofar as the anti-reductionist about testimony is expressing an adherence to coherentism, in opposition to foundationalism, I am with her. But this issue of global reductionism, or foundationalism about testimony, comes apart from the issue I am concerned to address. My issue is the local reductionist question: whether, *within* a subject's coherent system of beliefs and inferential practices (in the gradual dawning of light over which testimony will have played an essential part), beliefs from testimony can be exhibited as justified in virtue of very general patterns of inference and justification; or if a normative epistemic principle special to testimony must be invoked to vindicate them and explain their status as knowledge. The issue whether there is a presumptive right to trust not based on evidence is this internal, coherentist issue.

5.

Is knowledge through testimony a distinctive category of knowledge at all? First note that we may define as our epistemic category, and topic of investigation: coming to know that something is so, through knowing

that a certain speaker has asserted it to be so. This definition is restrictive in two respects. First, as to what comes to be known. This restriction is theoretically apt, since there is clearly nothing systematic and general to be said about the unrestricted topic of 'whatever one may be able to infer, on an occasion, from the fact that someone has made an assertoric utterance with a certain content of that occasion'; while we may, as in the present paper, hope to say something general about the inferential path via which a hearer may come to know that which is the content of an assertion, from the fact that it has been asserted. Second, the definition restricts the means by which knowledge of that which is asserted is gained, to being via knowledge of the content and force of the speech act (which will, normally, be obtained through understanding it). This definition excludes, from counting as knowledge gained through testimony, any knowledge gained by one who takes a 'barometer' approach to a group of creatures: that is, who tries to obtain information about the world, from discovering correlations between the sounds the creatures make, and how things objectively are – but who does not regard the creatures as agents nor categorise their utterances as intelligent speech acts. This exclusion is again theoretically apt, since the mechanism involved in gaining any such knowledge is quite different; but in any case, the possibilities for finding such brute phonetic type/environmental-state correlations are very limited, with regard to a fully sophisticated human language-using practice.

But in one respect our definition is permissive: there is no restriction on the subject matter of the speaker's assertion. The domain of potential knowledge through testimony is, on this conception, that of serious assertions aimed at communication, whatever their subject matter. This is at odds with the ordinary language use of 'testimony', which tends to confine it to eye-witness reports of observable events.

Testimony, defined as just suggested, does indeed constitute a distinctive kind of *epistemic link*. There is a distinctive type of connection, characteristic of testimony, between a state of affairs, and a hearer's coming to believe in its obtaining. This connection runs through another *person*, a speaker – her own original acquisition of the same belief, her other mental states, her subsequent linguistic act, which transmits that belief to the hearer.[17] There being this distinctive type of link between a hearer, and what she comes to believe, in testimony, means that there is a distinctive type of justification associated with testimony, in the sense suggested earlier: we can identify a characteristic justificatory schema

$\mathcal{T}$. A hearer has knowledge through testimony just when she has knowledge whose content is given by appropriate instances of the elements of $\mathcal{T}$, and can cite such knowledge, or evidence for it, in defence of her belief. But what there is not, this paper argues, is any new *principle of inference* or other normative epistemic principle involved, which is special to testimony.

This makes the 'problem of justifying testimony' unlike the 'problem of induction'. In the latter, the task is to show the legitimacy of a general *principle* of inference, one which is broadly comparable to the principles of deductive inference in the way in which it validates particular inferences of the form in question. It is therefore appropriate to approach the 'problem of induction' at a completely general level. The task is to show that an arbitrary inductive inference is valid, by showing that the principle of inference involved in any such inference is a valid one.[18]

Now the anti-reductionist may mistakenly suppose that the task of justifying testimony must be approached by looking for some highly general premise or principle which would serve to justify an *arbitrary* testimony belief. Her error stems from a mistaken assimilation of the form of the problem of justifying testimony to that of justifying induction. An anti-reductionist who makes this mistake will start by investigating whether the blanket generalisation 'Testimony is generally reliable' can be non-circularly empirically established, with the idea that this general premise, if established, would suffice to justify an arbitrary testimony belief. Finding that such global independent confirmation of testimony is unattainable, she concludes that testimony-beliefs must instead be justified by a special non-empirical normative epistemic principle.

My local-reductionist approach avoids the initial mistake, and so short-circuits the anti-reductionist's argument. If what were in question *were* a special normative epistemic principle, concerning testimony as a distinctive and unitary category of knowledge, then it would indeed apply indifferently to an arbitrary piece of testimony, and the task of justifying it would need to be conducted at an abstract general level. (Thus positive arguments *for* a blanket PR must indeed be conducted at that level.) But if there is no special epistemic principle in question, and what is common to all and only instances of knowledge through testimony is just a characteristic kind of belief-producing causal process, then there is no reason why what justifies belief in particular instances of testimony must be some proposition or principle applying to testimony

in general. Instead, what justifies a particular hearer's belief in a particular assertion may be her knowledge of relevant facts about that situation and speaker, which warrant her in trusting him. (These will be, as it were, the *foreground* justifying facts – the ones in virtue of her knowledge of which she has gained *this* piece of knowledge through testimony. And which, as a minimum, we may require her to be able to articulate in its defence, for her belief to qualify as knowledge. Of course these facts can bestow knowledge of trustworthiness, and hence of what is asserted, only on a hearer who is equipped with a suitable background of more general knowledge. The account of §§7, 8 will spell out what this is.)

I suggested above that it was hopeless, but fortunately unnecessary for any legitimate enquiry, for an individual to try for *wholly independent* confirmation of the blanket generalisation that 'Testimony is generally reliable'. But it is only on this foundationalist conception of the project of confirmation that it is impossible. A more limited, non-foundationalist version (in which the enquirer makes no attempt to abrogate all of her existing knowledge which depends on testimony) is a perfectly feasible research project. But I think that looking for generalisations about the reliability or otherwise of testimony, in the inclusive sense of *serious assertions aimed at communication of belief*, as a homogeneous whole, will not be an enlightening project. Illuminating generalisations, if there are any, will be about particular types of testimony, differentiated according to subject matter, or type of speaker, or both. True, there is a belief-producing process characteristic of testimony, and consequently a generic type of justification, as captured in $\mathcal{T}$. This gives one sense in which it is a distinctive and unitary category of knowledge. But when it comes to the probability of accuracy of speakers' assertions, and what sorts of factors warrant a hearer in trusting a speaker, testimony is not a unitary category. The account of how trustworthiness may be empirically established given in §8 below draws on and develops this idea. One aspect of the disunity is, I shall argue, that while there are certain limited epistemic rights to trust involved in particular types of testimony, there is no *blanket* PR to believe what is asserted without needing evidence of trustworthiness, applicable to serious assertions aimed at communication as a whole, regardless of subject matter and circumstances.

6.

In §8 I shall sketch an account of how the trustworthiness with respect to an utterance of a speaker may be confirmed. The kind of confirmation described is, I maintain, often available, and is sought by a discriminating, justifiedly-believing, hearer. The account adopts the standpoint of our commonsense theory of persons and of the nature of speech acts, according to which it is a contingent matter whether a particular assertoric utterance is true, and the speaker trustworthy; and vindicates, within this framework of commonsense theory, the view that a speaker's trustworthiness with respect to an utterance is an empirically ascertainable matter.

But we need first to clarify further the PR thesis which I am opposing. It has several dimensions of possible variation in strength, which must be spelt out, if we are to see just what is the contrast between it, and the view I shall propose.

The 'presumptive epistemic right' in question is a right to form belief in a certain proposition in a certain situation, without needing to have further evidence, or to make further investigations. But we get a weaker, or a stronger thesis, according to what this proposition is. The strongest PR thesis (that is, the one which demands the least of the hearer!) is one which legitimises *simple trust* as capable of yielding knowledge. A hearer has this attitude to a speaker if and only if she is disposed to form belief in any proposition which the speaker seriously asserts in an utterance whose content she grasps; and she lacks the conceptual capacity even to appreciate the possibility that what the speaker says may be false; that is, she lacks a full grasp of our *common-sense linguistics* (CSL), which contains a conception of the nature of language as a social institution, and of the epistemic link which testimony constitutes, including the nature of the speaker's action, and her typical role. (Simple trust is, plausibly, the condition of children at a certain stage in their development.) A simple truster does not have the conception of the speaker's trustworthiness or lack of it, nor appreciate the need for it, so there is no question of her believing in it. A PR thesis endorsing simple trust thus posits an epistemic right on the part of a hearer to believe what is asserted in an utterance, without further conditions, when she has perceived and grasped the content of that utterance; thus in particular without requiring of the hearer-knower the capacity to conceive the trustworthiness of the speaker. (This cagey formulation is required,

since it is doubtful whether one who lacks a full grasp of CSL, though she may respond to an utterance by forming a belief in what is asserted, can be said to conceive the utterance as an assertion in the full richness of that concept.)

A weaker PR thesis, which requires that the hearer be a master of CSL, and appreciate the need for trustworthiness, posits an epistemic right on the part of a hearer to presume an arbitrary speaker to be trustworthy, without needing to have any evidence for this, or to engage in any assessment of the speaker. This thesis is, in the first instance, a licence to believe in the trustworthiness of the speaker; and only derivatively, in the proposition she asserts.

The first, strongest PR thesis makes sense as a thesis about the conditions under which a subject may acquire knowledge from others' assertions (although of course other, 'external' conditions must be added – at the very least truth of what is asserted); but only as part of a reliabilist account of that concept. It cannot be part of any plausible justificationist account, since a subject cannot defend her belief unless she understands the defence; and, as remarked, even the concept of assertion is not available to one who lacks the rest of CSL – lacks understanding that an assertion is, by the nature of the act, not necessarily true, hence the speaker needs to be trustworthy, etc. A simple truster is not in a position to say, with full understanding, even "Someone told me so".

We can therefore leave behind this strongest PR thesis, and consider further only the PR to assume trustworthiness; which restricts the domain of knowledge through testimony to masters of CSL, full participants in the social institution of language, conceptually equipped to play the speaker's, as well as the hearer's role.[19] The point of this PR being the consequent entitlement to believe what is asserted, it is, of course, the minimal gap-bridging property of trustworthiness of the speaker with respect to her current utterance, which is its immediate object. No epistemic right to assume any generalisation about speakers' trustworthiness is needed. Cf. the local/global distinction drawn earlier. Of course the sense in which a hearer is required by our PR to assume, or believe, the speaker to be trustworthy, is not that she is required consciously to form that belief, or consider the question, whenever she forms a belief in what a speaker asserts; but merely that she appreciates the need for trustworthiness, and is disposed to judge the speaker to be trustworthy (or else to abandon her original belief in what

was asserted), when challenged. Implicit belief in trustworthiness will always be attributable to such a hearer, when she believes an assertion.

Our epistemic right to believe (whether in trustworthiness, or in what is asserted), to be at all plausible, must be only 'presumptive' – that is, it must be defeasible in appropriate circumstances. Several dimensions of variation enter here: as to what these 'defeating conditions' (d.c.s) are, and what the hearer's relation to them must be. How strong an epistemic charter our PR thesis is will depend very much on these details of its specification.

A d.c. is, certainly, a condition which cancels the hearer's epistemic right to believe – in the speaker's trustworthiness or, for the strong PR, in what is asserted. That is to say, when the hearer knows one to obtain, she should not form, at any rate not without further evidence, the 'defeated' belief. This gives us a first aspect of the hearer's required relation to a d.c.. On a reliabilist approach, it could be enough that her disposition to believe is thus cancelled, when she is aware of a d.c. But within a justificationist approach, it must be that this disposition of the hearer stems from her appreciation of how the d.c. 'defeats' this belief. Here, there is again a weaker and a stronger option. A d.c. may defeat a proposition, in the sense that it constitutes strong evidence for the falsity of that proposition. Call these *proposition-defeating* d.c.s. Alternatively, it may merely defeat, i.e. cancel, the right to presume that proposition to be true – being a circumstance which indicates that the proposition *may* not be, or cannot be assumed to be true, rather than being definite evidence for its falsity. Call these *presumption-defeating* d.c.s. Clearly, the proposition-defeating d.c.s with respect to any presumptive belief are a subset of the presumption-defeating d.c.s. So a presumptive right to believe in the trustworthiness of a speaker which is cancelled by anything which throws in doubt the presumption that a speaker is trustworthy, will be much weaker – since much more often defeated – than one which is cancelled only by definite evidence of untrustworthiness.

Similarly, a defeasible right to believe in trustworthiness is a weaker epistemic charter for hearers, than a defeasible right to believe what is asserted – since anything which defeats '*P*' will, ex post, defeat the speaker's trustworthiness with respect to any utterance she makes in which she asserts that *P*; while the converse does not hold. The strongest possible PR – to believe that *P*, just on the ground that it has been asserted that *P*, whenever one does not already possess evidence showing '*P*'

to be false, is indeed an epistemic charter for gullibility! But the weakest one: Where the presumptive right is to assume trustworthiness, and a d.c. is any condition which defeats the presumption, by merely raising a question as to the speaker's likely trustworthiness, is a much more limited affair.

There remains a further dimension of variation in the hearer's required relation to the d.c.s, in whichever sense these are taken. The nub of their being d.c.s, is that when the hearer is aware of one, she should not form the 'defeated' belief. When the d.c.s defeat the proposition that the speaker is trustworthy, she should not form belief in it at all; when they defeat the presumption in favour of trustworthiness, she should not believe in it without further investigation: without first engaging in some assessment of the speaker for trustworthiness. The further dimension of variation which remains is: Is the hearer required to look for, be on the alert for, the presence of such d.c.s (of whichever kind)? We know that, when aware of one, she should withhold belief: but is she in addition required to ensure that whenever a d.c. obtains, she will be aware of it, if it is within her epistemic grasp to be so? Or, if not this first, which is a very onerous requirement, then is she at least required to engage in some search for d.c.s, or to be on the alert for the presence or d.c.s?

In fact, the grid of differences set up by our dimensions of variation exhibits some collapse here. Conditions which defeat the *presumption* in favour of trustworthiness are conditions which switch on a requirement to assess the speaker for trustworthiness, i.e. they switch off the right just to assume this without checking on it, the dispensation from epistemic activity which the right to presume trustworthiness constitutes. But to be obliged to keep a constant look-out for any conditions which would suggest that the speaker may not be trustworthy, is not very different from being obliged to assess the speaker for trustworthiness, simpliciter! Such an attenuated PR is not a PR at all: it is not a dispensation from epistemic activity. If the d.c.s defeat the *proposition* that the speaker is trustworthy, the requirement always to be on the look out for such conditions is somewhat less onerous, but still seems not to be very much weaker than a straightforward requirement to assess the speaker for trustworthiness. The notion of a PR, we may conclude, seems only to make sense when it is interpreted as giving the hearer the right to believe without engaging in epistemic activity; when there is no requirement to be on the alert for d.c.s, of either kind.

These considerations reveal the possibility of an interestingly different kind of thesis, which is not a PR, that is, a dispensation from the requirement to assess the speaker; but is rather a thesis applying within the project of assessment, about how it is properly done. I shall call it a *default-position* thesis. To say that a hearer must withhold belief in a speaker's trustworthiness whenever she is aware of signs revealing untrustworthiness, and that moreover she is obliged to be on the alert for such signs, is tantamount to saying the following: the hearer is obliged, always, to assess the speaker for trustworthiness; but within this exercise, the hypothesis of trustworthiness has special status in that it is the default position – it is to be ascribed, in the absence of positive signs of its opposite. The account given in the §8 of how a speaker's trustworthiness may be assessed by a hearer will posit limited default position precepts in favour of what we will shortly identify as the components of trustworthiness.

Our discussion has shown that a PR thesis which is strong enough to be worthy of the name, while fitting into a justificationist framework, is best formulated thus:

> PR: An arbitrary hearer *H* has the epistemic right, on any occasion of testimony *O*, to assume, without any investigation or assessment, of the speaker *S* who on *O* asserts that *P* by making an utterance *U*, that *S* is trustworthy with respect to *U*, unless *H* is aware of a condition *C* which defeats this assumption of trustworthiness – that is, *C* constitutes strong evidence that *S* is not trustworthy with respect to *U*; in which case, *H* should not form belief that *P* on the strength of *S*'s assertion that *P*, and should believe, at least implicitly, that *S* is not trustworthy with respect to *U*.

This PR is still programmatic, in that it does not specify just what circumstances would constitute strong evidence against trustworthiness, and there is scope for broader and narrower interpretation here. But it clearly involves what we have identified as the key element of a PR: the dispensation from the requirement to monitor or assess the speaker for trustworthiness, before believing in it. Thus it may be called a PR to believe *blindly*, or uncritically, since the hearer's critical faculties are not required to be engaged. Notice also that it is a *blanket* PR, entitling the hearer to believe in trustworthiness, hence in what is asserted, on any occasion of testimony, whatever the subject matter may be.

(Assuming only that the nature of the subject matter can never in itself constitute strong *ex ante* evidence against trustworthiness.)

It is such a blanket PR to believe blindly that constitutes an epistemic charter for the gullible, and to which I am opposed. The account of how empirical confirmation of trustworthiness is possible set out in §8 involves a limited presumption in favour of trustworthiness, in the very different sense we have identified: it is, in some circumstances, the default hypothesis *within* the critical task of assessing the speaker for trustworthiness.

7.

The thesis I advocate in opposition to a PR thesis, is that a hearer should always engage in some assessment of the speaker for trustworthiness. To believe what is asserted without doing so is to believe blindly, uncritically. This is gullibility. (Though not the only kind. Believing in trustworthiness too easily, i.e. attempting assessment, but doing it badly, is also being gulled!)

So – to return to our central question – if indeed a properly discriminating hearer always assesses a speaker for trustworthiness, what precisely is this property, and how is an empirically-based estimate of it obtainable?

Our method is to develop an epistemology of testimony, including an account of what a speaker's trustworthiness with respect to an utterance consists in, by appeal to the relevant parts of our commonsense theory of the world. This stance is part of a coherentist approach in epistemology: we criticise our belief-forming methods, and standards of justification, from *within* our existing conceptual scheme, rather than attempting to find some mythical point outside it from which to do so.

Now, CSL tells us that, in the normal case,[20] a serious assertoric utterance by a speaker *S* is true just if *S* is sincere, i.e. believes what she knowingly[21] asserts, and the belief she thereby expresses is true. This breakdown is entailed by the commonsense conception of the nature of a speech act of assertion, and of the link between its occurrence, and the obtaining of the state of affairs asserted to obtain. And commonsense person-theory tells us that it is moreover contingent whether any particular utterance is both sincere, and expresses a true belief: it is inherent in the nature of the link, and the psychology of the human subjects who are speakers, that insincerity and honest error are both

perfectly possible. Indeed, commonsense person theory tells us that false utterances are quite common, especially for some subject matters. (This, we may note, constitutes the prima facie case against a blanket PR to assume any assertoric utterance to be true, a fortiori against one to assume that the speaker is trustworthy. The case is an application of the epistemic precept: 'If a significant percentage of *F*s are not *G*, one should not infer that *X* is *G*, merely from the fact that it is *F*.' A belief so formed is not epistemically rational, which is to say it is not justified.)

In §3 we gave Trus1 as a rough initial explication of a speaker's trustworthiness with respect to an utterance *U* made on an occasion *O*, by which she asserts that *P*. Trus1 is logically equivalent to the claim: 'If *S* were to assert that *P* on *O*, then her assertion would be true'. We have now seen that the truth of *S*'s utterance breaks down (in the normal case to which we confine ourselves) into the utterance's being sincere, and *S*'s expressed belief being true. This suggests that we may frame a more illuminating definition of a speaker *S*'s trustworthiness with respect to an utterance *U* made on an occasion *O*, by which she asserts that *P*, thus:

> *Trus2*: 'If *S* were to assert that *P* on *O*, then it would be the case that *S*'s assertion is sincere, and that the belief she thereby expresses is true.'

Trus2 fulfils our basic requirement on T_2, that of entailing '*P*' when combined with T_1. It is more illuminating than Trus1, since *S*'s sincerity, and whether it is likely that if *S* on *O* believes that *P*, then her belief will be true, are what a hearer may, in the first instance, make an empirically-based assessment of. (It is not equivalent to Trus1, since it does not cover the fluke case of a would-be liar who unknowingly utters a truth.)

But the illumination this breakdown provides also shows that Trus2 (and so also Trus1) gives a definition of trustworthiness which is needlessly strong. To be justified in believing what is asserted by an utterance *U* of a speaker *S* on an occasion *O*, a hearer need not know that *any* utterance with that content by *S* on *O* would be sincere; it is enough that she is able to tell that *S*'s *actual* utterance *U* is so. And this difference of strength is empirically significant. We may take sincerity to be a predicate of utterances, and it is very often precisely a

particular utterance that a hearer *H* is able to tell to be sincere, through sensitivity to such features of its delivery as tone of voice, and manner of the speaker. *H* may be able to tell this about an utterance of a speaker who in fact, and perhaps to *H*'s knowledge, is very often insincere – one of whom the stronger sincerity condition contained in Trus2 is false.

Thus, I suggest, our best and final definition of a speaker's trustworthiness with respect to an utterance *U* is as follows:

> *Trus(S, U)*: A speaker *S* is trustworthy with respect to an assertoric utterance by her *U*, which is made on an occasion *O*, and by which she asserts that *P*, if and only if

(i) *U* is sincere, and

(ii) *S* is *competent with respect to 'P' on O*, where this notion is defined as follows:

If *S* were sincerely to assert that *P* on *O*, then it would be the case that *P*.

In this definition the relativisation to a particular utterance *U* by *S* is not idle.

Trus(*S*, *U*) fulfils, as best we can,[22] the requirements explained in §3. It combines with *T* to entail '*P*', and there is no weaker alternative which does so, and which is epistemically independent of '*P*'. *S*'s 'competence with respect to *P*' is defined as in (ii), rather than by a strictly weaker material conditional, in order to fulfil the desideratum of epistemic independence of '*P*', which we saw in §3 that a material conditional fails (equally when the requirement of sincerity is inserted in the antecedent).[23] Notice also that it is right to take the antecedent as in (ii), rather than 'If *S* were to believe that *P* on *O* . . .'. The latter would give a condition which is again unnecessarily strong: perhaps it is only the worlds in which *S* believes that *P* sufficiently confidently to *assert* her belief, that are all *P*-worlds.

Trus(*S*, *U*) is weaker than the everyday notion of someone's being a trustworthy or reliable informant, since the latter usually refers to a speaker's assertions more generally, implying that she is generally sincere, and is competent with respect to most of the things she makes claims about. But a person *S* who is untrustworthy, in this generalised sense, can still be Trus(*S*, *U*), and known by a hearer *H* to be so, with respect to a particular utterance *U*; in which case, *H* has grounds to

believe what is asserted by that utterance. Trus(S, U) is the minimal gap-bridging property which we set out to find. As such, it captures the idea that *that utterance* of the speaker is to be trusted.

8.

We have identified the question how a speaker S's trustworthiness regarding an utterance U may be empirically confirmed as the question how Trus(S, U) may be confirmed, that is to say, how the sincerity of U, and S's competence with respect to the content of U, may be confirmed. Notice that these claims are not esoteric, nor technical, but are mere spellings out of what sheer common sense about language, and speakers, tells us.[24] Thus in requiring that hearers appreciate the need for trustworthiness, and assess the speaker for it, we are requiring nothing more than what any full participant in the institution of human language is well equipped to appreciate the need for; and, as I shall now argue, can very often achieve.

In recognising an utterance by a speaker as a speech act of serious assertion, with a certain content, a hearer is ipso facto engaging in a minimal piece of *interpretation* of the speaker – ascribing to her an intentional action of a certain kind, and hence at the very least supposing the existence of some configuration of beliefs and desires which explain that action. The theme of my account is: the epistemically responsible hearer will do a bit more of the same. She will assess the speaker for sincerity and competence, by engaging in at least a little more interpretation of her.

A speaker's sincerity and competence, or lack of them, are aspects of her psychology – in the case of competence, in a suitably 'broad' sense, which takes in relevant parts of her environment. Assessment of them is part of, or a prediction from, a more extended psychological theory of her. So, in order to assess a speaker's trustworthiness, a hearer needs to piece together at least a fragment of such a theory of the speaker – an ascription of beliefs, desires, and other mental states and character traits to her. Thus it is commonsense psychology or person-theory, and the related epistemic norms for attribution of these states, that we must look to, to see how trustworthiness can be evaluated.

Notice therefore that while, as we saw in §4, one way of estimating a speaker's trustworthiness is by induction from past assertions of hers independently confirmed as accurate, this is not the best way. As always,

predictions from a *theory* of the subject matter in question – in this case, the psychology of the speaker – will do better, and where there is conflict should override mere extrapolation of observed correlations with no underlying explanation of why they obtain.[25]

Indeed the primary task for the hearer is to construct enough of a theory of the speaker, and relevant portions of her past and present environment, to *explain* her utterance: to render it comprehensible why she made that assertion, on that occasion. Whether the speaker's assertion is to be trusted will, generally speaking, be fall-out from this theory which explains why she made it; and it is difficult to see how sincerity and competence could be evaluated other than through the construction of such an explanation.

(The need to explain the utterance is sharply felt, when a hitherto reliable informant makes a wildly unlikely claim. – Has she gone crazy? Or been elaborately tricked? Is she kidding? – Or is the best explanation that her outrageous claim to have seen flying saucers is really *true*? We feel at a loss; but it is these alternative explanatory hypotheses that we dither between.)

A psychological interpretation of an individual being an explanatory theory of her, psychological concepts are theoretical in character at least in the respect that their meanings are fixed by their mutual interconnections, and their application to a subject is only holistically constrained by the 'data' to be explained, the subject's actions. Thus the norms which govern ascription of sincerity and competence will be part and parcel of the norms governing the ascription of psychological states more comprehensively. Notice however that norms of ascription – call them *Norms of Interpretation* – whose existence and correctness might be explained by the thesis that they have constitutive status in defining the so-applied psychological concepts, are ones which, at least in the first instance, apply to the highly idealised enterprise of constructing an extensive interpreting description of a person, with 'all' the data to hand; not to the construction of a small fragment of one, on very limited evidence. We shall return to this point below.

I shall first state what I think are the epistemic norms regarding how a speaker's sincerity with respect to an utterance, and competence regarding its content, may properly be estimated by a hearer; and then address the question of why they hold.

In claiming that a hearer is required to assess a speaker for trustworthiness, I do not mean to insist, absurdly, that she is required to

conduct an extensive piece of M15-type 'vetting' of any speaker before she may accept anything he says as true (cf. the implausibly onerous requirement dismissed earlier). My insistence is much weaker: that the hearer should be discriminating in her attitude to the speaker, in that she should be continually evaluating him for trustworthiness throughout their exchange, in the light of the evidence, or cues, available to her. This will be partly a matter of her being disposed to deploy background knowledge which is relevant, partly a matter of her monitoring the speaker for any tell-tale signs revealing likely untrustworthiness. This latter consists in it being true throughout of the hearer that if there were signs of untrustworthiness, she would register them, and respond appropriately.

Such monitoring of speakers, and appropriate doxastic responses formed on its basis are, I suggest, usually found in ordinary hearers, at least to some extent. However, this sort of monitoring for signs of untrustworthiness in a speaker is typically conducted at a non-conscious level. And while its results can generally be fished up into consciousness and expressed, albeit roughly, in words ("I didn't like the look of him"; "Well, she seemed perfectly normal"), no doubt the specific cues in a speaker's behaviour which constitute the informational basis for this judgement will often be registered and processed at an irretrievably sub-personal level. Can a justificationist account of knowledge allow that this kind of process may be knowledge-yielding? Yes, it can: insisting that subjects be able to retail the details of the cues they have responded to is demanding the impossible; but we may insist, compatibly with the sub-personal character of these perceptual or quasi-perceptual capacities, that the subject's beliefs must not be opaque to her, in that she must be able to defend the judgement which is the upshot of this capacity with the knowledge precisely that she indeed has such a capacity – that 'she can tell' about that kind of thing; though she does not know how she does it.

Expert dissimulators amongst us being few, the insincerity of an utterance is very frequently betrayed in the speaker's manner, and so is susceptible of detection by such a quasi-perceptual capacity. But honestly expressed false belief is not so readily detectable, and an informed assessment of a speaker's competence about some subject will typically require that the hearer already know something of the speaker's cognitive talents and failings. How then is knowledge of the latter attainable by a hearer, without, if not an M15-style vetting, then at least

a lot more research than is feasible, when you just want to know the time and have forgotten your watch? As regards sincerity, I suggested that it was tell-tale signs of its absence that a hearer must be disposed to pick up. The flip-side of this coin is that, while there is no right to assume sincerity without monitoring the speaker for it, sincerity is the default position, in assessing a speaker, in the sense we identified earlier; one is justified in taking a speaker to be sincere, unless one observes (and one must be alert for them) symptoms of duplicity.

And, I suggest, the same is true regarding a speaker's competence, *with respect to a certain range of subject matters* – namely, all those for which commonsense person theory tells us that people are nearly always right about such things. Just which topics come within this range is a further question; but it certainly includes such matters as: everyday perceptions of familiar types of item in one's current environment; memories, not too finely specified, of very recent events in one's personal history – such as what one had for breakfast; and a whole range of basic facts about oneself and one's life – one's name, where one works, one's tastes, etc. On such matters, I suggest, competence is the default position – that is to say, one may justifiedly assume a sincere assertion by a person of whom one has no previous knowledge to be true, when its subject matter comes within this range, just so long as one remains alert for any sign in their circumstances, or manner, to suggest otherwise, and there are no such signs.

But there are many other possible topics of assertion about which commonsense person theory tells us that people are often, even in some cases usually, wrong. For these subject matters there is no default presumption in favour of competence, and one is not justified in believing what someone says about such things unless one has specific knowledge of their relevant cognitive talents and circumstances.

9.

In virtue of what do these 'default position' norms of attribution in favour of sincerity and, for certain everyday subject matters, competence, obtain? We can identify two opposed views about this. The first view, which is my own, runs as follows: These practical epistemic norms for *ascribing* the psychological attributes of sincerity, and competence, are justified because, and just insofar as, it is fact, and is part of commonsense person theory, that (i) nearly all utterances which seem sincere indeed are so;

and (ii) About these everyday subject matters, where there are no special circumstances, normal people are nearly always right. (Correspondingly, there is no default position in favour of competence for non-everyday subject matters, just because it is not part of commonsense wisdom about persons that they are usually right about these things.)

The opposed view objects to mine as follows: "This explanation gets things the wrong way round. These facts of commonsense person-theory are themselves so as a consequence of the fact that the default positions are epistemic norms governing the ascription of psychological concepts; so they cannot be appealed to to explain or justify these norms. More fully: (i) The obtaining of these norms of ascription guarantees that these 'commonsense' facts will be so – so that they are not, as they might seem, contingent, but are features of individuals' psychology which are guaranteed to be so in virtue of the way psychological concepts are correctly applied. And (ii) the direction of explanation, and justification, is from the existence of the norms of ascription, to the commonsense facts, not vice versa: These norms of ascription are primitive features of psychological concepts, which serve to fix their content; not rules of application which stand in need of justification by appeal to a supposed independently fixed content."

This opposed view is mistaken, as I shall now show. I think it is plausible that there exist Norms of Interpretation (NIs), in the sense explained earlier: norms for applying psychological concepts[26] which have constitutive a priori status, fixing the content of these concepts; so that the truth of an *interpreting description*, as we may call it, of an individual reduces to its fitting the individual in accordance with the correct set of such NIs. But, as mentioned earlier, such a reduction of truth conditions to conditions of ascription will hold, if at all, only with respect to a highly idealised, fancied all-data-in interpretation exercise. And the NIs which apply in such an exercise are by no means the same thing as practical epistemic precepts, applicable in the task of estimating a speaker's trustworthiness on a very limited basis of evidence about her. Whether they transfer to this limited-evidence (and limited aspiration) case is a further question.

And, I suggest, they do not transfer. It is plausible that 'Make no unforced attributions of insincerity', and the parallel principle for false beliefs, are among the correct NIs. But their being so does not ensure that the best interpreting description of an individual will show her as being mainly sincere, or as having mainly true beliefs; that depends on

what departures from the default setting are forced by other NIs. Perhaps there are *also* NIs setting a lower bound on how much insincerity, or false belief, an individual may turn out to have, *salva* the hypothesis that she is indeed a subject of attitudes. But these are further, entirely distinct, constraints. And, I suggest, any such bounds, while being essentially vague, are nonetheless clearly quite low – both for truth of beliefs, and for sincerity of utterances.

If this is right, then it is indeed a contingent empirical fact, not guaranteed by any concept-constituting norms of application of psychological concepts, that, in some given linguistic community, nearly all apparently-sincere utterances are so; and that the speakers in the community nearly always have true beliefs – if not on all subjects (this being palpably false), then at least over a certain quite broad range of subject matters.

There is of course an essentially vague lower bound on the possible incidence of insincerity in a community: beyond a certain point, hearers would cease ever to have the typical responses which are partly constitutive of what it is for a sentence to have a given meaning in a community, and the language would wither away, or change its meaning. But – to reiterate the claim – this lower bound is quite low. In any case, this argument establishes no lower bound on how often any *single* member of a community may lie, *salva* the persistence of language in that community. As regards false belief, I do think it is a priori that for any individual there must be some core range of observable conditions in her immediate environment, such that she is at least disposed to have mainly true beliefs about such matters. If this is not so, she cannot be seen as having the capacity for states of informedness about her environment (which beliefs essentially are) at all. But, once more, this conceptually necessary condition is too weak to affect the current argument.

The 'default position' precepts of attribution we have canvassed, applicable in the limited interpretation exercise typically engaged in by a hearer, clearly would not be justified if the commonsense facts which I have suggested to justify them were *not* so; the issue is only as to the direction of explanation between norm of attribution, and commonsense fact. If, as I have claimed, these commonsense facts are not guaranteed to hold by any constitutive attribution-norms for psychological concepts, then their contingent obtaining plays an essential part in the justifying explanation of these default position precepts, and the direction of explanation is as I have suggested: even if there are Norms of

Interpretation, and amongst them default settings in favour of sincerity, and true belief, these do not transfer automatically to the limited-evidence setting, and such limited-evidence default position precepts are justified only by contingent facts of commonsense person theory, and hold only in a community in which these indeed obtain.[27]

A corollary of my account is that in a community in which these facts which justify the default position precepts were not so, knowledge (though not necessarily belief!) gained from what other people tell one would be much less easily come by, and less widespread. But a language might thrive there nevertheless. Transmission of accurate information is not the only social role and function of the social institution of human language; from many perspectives on human life it is not even the primary one.[28]

10.

The skeptical reader may want to ask at this point: – Just how different is the proposed account from a PR thesis? And can knowledge of trustworthiness obtained in the manner described really be called empirically based?

For assertions whose subject matter is outside the range for which there is a default position in favour of competence, the contrast between my account and a PR thesis is obvious. But a clear difference remains too in cases in which there is a default position in favour of both components of trustworthiness. My account requires a hearer always to take a critical stance to the speaker, to assess her for trustworthiness; while a true PR thesis, as we have seen, does not. The nub of this distinction is a clear and sharp difference: on my account, but not on a PR thesis, the hearer must always be monitoring the speaker critically. This is a matter of the actual engagement of a counterfactual sensitivity: it is true throughout of the hearer that if there were any signs of untrustworthiness, she would pick them up.

Moreover, as we have seen, the limited default positions in favour of the components of trustworthiness which my account posits, are precepts within the task of constructing a psychological theory of the speaker, not a dispensation from engaging in this task. There is no recognising their defeating conditions except through a general grasp of commonsense psychological concepts, and so the precepts can be conformed to (a fortiori appropriate defence of belief can be given),

only by one who is a master of the latter. Thus, on my account, a person may gain knowledge from others only when she has the needed conceptual framework to conceive and understand them as persons and agents; and moreover engages, at least to some extent, in that interpretative task. The strongest PR thesis we identified earlier does not require this at all; our best formulation, while it required that the utterance is conceived as the speech act it is, did not require any interpretation of the speaker beyond what this itself involves.

Ascribing trustworthiness to a speaker is positing part of a larger psychological theory of her. Such a theory is empirically constrained by, and explanatory of, the speaker's behaviour. The fact that there are certain default settings regarding its construction does not detract from this. In any case the default position precepts do not allow ascription of trustworthiness on no evidence at all: even when trustworthiness is ascribed just on the strength of them, empirical warrant for this is needed, in the sense that the absence of defeaters must have been checked for – as, I have suggested, the hearer will show with such defence as "Well, she seemed perfectly normal".

But it is important to remember that, as we saw above, while our default position precepts represent what is, given the facts of commonsense psychology, sufficient ground for ascribing trustworthiness to an unknown person, what that person's indeed being trustworthy with respect to her assertion consists in is far from reducing to the obtaining of these limited-evidence ascription conditions. Consequently, while undefeated presumption gives a reasonable basis to believe a speaker to be right about, say, where she lives, one gains stronger confirmation (or disconfirmation!) of her trustworthiness about this and other matters, as one gets to know more about her – acquires more specific knowledge of her relevant cognitive talents and circumstances. A fuller treatment would refine the account offered here by introducing degrees of confirmation, and would introduce into the account of when it is rational (justified) to believe the costs of error: When it matters very much whether what someone says is true, we are less ready to accept what she says without checking her credentials.

11.

We set out to examine whether knowledge from testimony is a special, irreducible type of knowledge. In reviewing what we have discovered,

we may broaden our question to ask not only whether testimony is a special epistemic category, but also whether it is a unitary one. We have found that testimony, appropriately defined, is a distinctive *epistemic link*. That is to say, it is a distinctive type of belief-producing process, and there is consequently a distinctive set of premise-schemata $\mathcal{T}$ recapitulating that process. Appropriate instances of the elements of $\mathcal{T}$, or evidence for them, when known by a hearer, may be offered by her in defence of a belief acquired through that process, and a belief of hers is known through testimony (*pace* certain qualifications made earlier) just when she is in a position so to defend it.

On the other hand, as regards the likelihood of truth of what is asserted by a speaker, and, consequently, whether a hearer is entitled to presume that she is trustworthy, we have seen that testimony, in the broad sense of serious assertions aimed at communication, is a rag-bag category. This is unsurprising, being a simple consequence of the fact, registered in commonsense person theory, that how likely people are to have true beliefs about a given subject matter depends entirely on what kind of thing it is, and how they are epistemically placed in regard to it. The epistemology of testimony can be no more homogeneous than is the psychology of belief, in this respect.

We have rejected the thesis that there is a blanket presumptive right to trust, applicable to all cases of testimony. Moreover the rag-bag nature of the category in regard of likely truth of what is asserted means that it is a mistake to expect to find *any* epistemic principles as to when one may believe testimony, which apply to all instances of it. Our default position in favour of competence was more selective.

Our account has explained how knowledge may be gained through testimony without recourse to any mysterious epistemic primitives pertaining just to testimony. The limited default positions in favour of sincerity and competence which we have discovered, are epistemic norms within the enterprise of ascribing psychological states to others. Their existence is derived from and explained by the nature of commonsense psychological concepts, whose significance and domain of answerability is much broader than just the explanation of people's assertoric utterances. Thus the conditions under which one may believe another's assertions have been exhibited as fall-out from the nature of commonsense psychological concepts. The epistemology of testimony in this respect is but one part of the broader domain of our knowledge of other minds, and is to be subsumed under that category, not treated as

a separate epistemic domain with its own, irreducible, normative epistemic principles.[29]

There is another central and fundamental respect in which testimony is a special, and unitary, epistemic category. This paper has taken for granted a hearer's knowledge that a speaker has made a speech act with a certain content and force, and has focussed on the question how she may get from there to knowledge of that which has been asserted. But the epistemology of a hearer's understanding of utterances, and appreciation of them as speech acts, will be at the heart of a full account of how knowledge is gained through testimony. Understanding, whether of one's own or others' utterances, involves special perceptual capacities and kinds of informational states, distinctive of language and of language-using creatures. The epistemology of understanding is intimately bound up with its phenomenology, and with the nature of these special states. Whether or not the best account of how a hearer may know what a speaker has said postulates any normative epistemic principles special to understanding, understanding remains a separate epistemic category in that it involves these special informational states.

The strategy of this paper – to take knowledge of what is asserted as given, and consider the next step – is valid only if the nature of understanding does not itself have implications for that next step. This means, at the very least, that it is not intrinsic to the state of understanding an utterance that it compels the hearer towards belief in what she grasps as being asserted. It is my view that there is nothing in the nature of what it is to understand an utterance which is in tension with the view of knowledge through testimony as inferential knowledge (in the sense that it must be backed by a substantial justification) sketched in this paper, or which provides the materials to defend the presumptive right thesis. But my defence of this claim, and my rejection of other positive arguments for PR, must wait till another day.[30]

So too must wait further defence of the coherentist epistemic stance within which my account has been developed, from which comes the thesis, essential to my 'local' reductionist approach, that only the local question about testimony needs to be answered, and that it should be answered, as we have done, from *within* the world picture constituted by the 'commonsense' framework of beliefs which we all share; thus that it does not matter, nor does it undermine the rationale of insisting on 'local' reduction and justification, if the global generalisation cannot be independently confirmed by an individual language-user; who will

have made her way into her shared language, and conceptual scheme, through a process in which she was necessarily, at an earlier stage, a simple truster. In this paper I have sought only to block the transcendental argument for a presumptive right thesis, by showing how empirical confirmation of the trustworthiness of a particular speaker is possible.[31]

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NOTES

[1] I am grateful here to accounts, both written and spoken, of the doctrines of the school, from Arindam Chakrabarti and Bimal Matilal. This pair of theses seems also to be implicit in the anti-reductionist stance of C. A. J. Coady 'Testimony and Observation', *Amer. Phil. Quart.* **10**, No. 2, April 1973, pp. 149–55.

[2] Thus for me, the issue of what it takes for a testimony belief to be justified is one with the issue what it takes for it to be knowledge. Those for whom those issues are not the same – since they favour some other conception of knowledge – may read my account as being simply about justification.

[3] I.e. a belief originally acquired through testimony, and whose status as knowledge still rests on that pedigree. In Fricker 'The Epistemology of Testimony', *Proc. Aris. Soc. Suppl.* vol. for 1987, pp. 57–83, I set out a framework which exhibits the complicated interrelations involved here, between original causation, sustaining, and available justifying support of a belief.

[4] This argument seems to be implicit in Coady *op. cit.*

[5] In this paper I am assuming that knowledge that such-and-such has been asserted is often had by hearers, and am focusing on the epistemology of the step from there, to knowledge of its truth. See §11.

[6] If this is shown, then it has been shown that testimony is not just a way of acquiring beliefs, but is moreover one which is capable of yielding knowledge, what we may call an *epistemic link*. Cf. Fricker *op. cit.*

[7] Throughout my discussion, '*H*', '*S*', and '*O*' are to be regarded as names for an arbitrary hearer, speaker, and occasion respectively. '*P*' in contrast must be considered merely a schematic letter holding a place to be occupied by an indicative sentence. Whether outside or inside quotes, '*S*', '*H*', and '*O*', and the possible substitution-instances for which '*P*' is schematic, are to be considered expressions of the metalanguage we are using to describe testimony situations. Thus schematic sentences enclosed in quotes, such as '*S* asserted that *P*', constitute (schematic) specifications by us, in our terms, of the content of a hearer's knowledge.

[8] Instances of $\mathcal{T}$ are sentences of a metalanguage which *we* use to describe what *H* knows. There is of course no guarantee a priori that we can thus identify a *single* justificatory schema which covers all and only cases of knowledge through testimony. But it turns out that we can do pretty well. See §5 for how we should define the epistemic link of 'testimony' to this end.

[9] Cf. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Ch. 10. An adequate

treatment of such collisions of contrary evidence would introduce probabilities, as a more detailed model of knowledge through testimony would do throughout.

10 Of course the grounds justifying a belief need not be so strong as to entail it. The reason for insisting nonetheless that the elements of $\mathcal{T}$ be chosen so as to together entail *P*, is pragmatic and ad hoc: this represents the best strategy for finding a single characteristic justificatory schema, and the resulting account is illuminating. The possibility of grounds for belief weaker than entailment is allowed for, in this set-up, in the fact that *H* need only have, and cite, evidence, which may be less than conclusive, that the relevant instances of $\mathcal{T}$ obtain. What may afford this last is endlessly variable, and we cannot hope for a general description circumscribing the possibilities.

11 Note however that it is a desideratum, rather than an absolute constraint, that we thus succeed in characterising knowledge through testimony just by means of our choice of a set $\mathcal{T}$. Clearly, one cannot find a $\mathcal{T}$ which is epistemically independent of the content of *S*'s assertion *whatever* the latter may be: c.f., when it is T_2 itself, or evidence for T_2. But these are special cases, and we may hope to find a $\mathcal{T}$ which is epistemically independent of the content of *S*'s assertion apart from such cases. As we shall see in §7, it proves difficult to achieve even this perfectly.

12 Equally, of course, when she knows that *S* has not asserted that *P* on *O*! But this case need not concern us, since there is no question of *H* gaining knowledge through *S*'s testimony, nor of all the elements of $\mathcal{T}$ obtaining.

13 An appropriate semantics for this conditional will make it strictly stronger than the material conditional, and with no supposition of falsity of the antecedent. Roughly, it will be true just if all the *nearest* *S*-asserts-that-*P* worlds are *P*-worlds, where the nearness relation is reflexive. It would be nice if a case could be made for a nearness metric which does not have the consequence that the conditional is ensured true whenever '*P*' is a nomological truth. I think the ordinary language locution is rightly heard thus; but finding a regimented semantics with this consequence is another matter. It would, very likely, involve relativising the standard of nearness to the identity of the antecedent.

14 It is no part of the reductionist position I am arguing for, to claim that empirical warrant for trusting the speaker is available on *every* occasion of testimony. This is clearly false. In cases where it is not, the anti-reductionist and reductionist will disagree over whether the hearer is entitled to trust the speaker, and, in the event she does believe what is asserted, can be said to gain knowledge.

15 A really strong general claim, to the effect that all, or virtually all assertions are true, *would* suffice to justify belief in an arbitrary assertion, in the absence of further 'defeaters'; and might indeed be employed in a meta-level argument to show the existence of a PR at object level. But a generalisation of this strength is obviously false. (A fortiori is not a conceptual truth about language, as one attempted argument for a PR would claim.)

16 As I understand it, this is an element in the Indian anti-reductionist case. And Coady *op. cit.* assumes the anti-reductionist must establish generalisations about the reliability of testimony.

17 Is this connection causal? Its latter stages which are our primary concern always are, but whether the speaker's initial acquisition of her belief can be thought of as caused by its subject matter depends on what kind of thing that is, and how her belief arose.

18 If the reader is unhappy with this view of the problem of induction, she may consider the justification of deduction instead, which surely takes this form.

19 Is this unkind to children? The upshot of my casual discussions with developmental

psychologists is that they (children) acquire the ability to lie, and so maybe the grasp of CSL which shows this possibility, remarkably early. But a feeling that my theory is too demanding on hearers may anyway be an intuition against the requirement that knowledge requires justification, rather than against my account of what it takes for a testimony-belief to be justified.

[20] Freak cases are possible – where a would-be deceiver happens to have a compensatingly false belief. But for our project, of giving a systematic general account of how knowledge is gained through testimony, we may set these aside, taking the normal case as our domain.

[21] That *S* understands her own utterance we may consider to be packed into the fact that it is a serious assertion. The epistemology of such knowledge is outside the scope of this paper.

[22] Note that the definition of competence given does not allow any inference 'backwards' to sincerity, from knowledge of competence and the truth of what is asserted; but a stronger definition – 'If *S* were to believe that *P*, then it would be the case that *P*', would do so. Intuitively, this kind of 'backwards' knowledge of sincerity can occur. There is another difficulty, viz. that one may also know competence backwards, when '*P*' expresses a necessary truth and one knows this fact; and equally, in the absence of a semantics which avoids this, when one knows it to express a nomological truth (see footnote in §3 above). But there is no alternative which meets our requirements better than the $\mathcal{T}$ consisting of T_1 and Trus(*S*, *U*); so we must perforce complete our characterisation of knowledge through testimony by putting restrictions on how sincerity and competence are known by *H*, which rule out these cases of 'backward' confirmation.

[23] The present account thus differs from the one I offered in Fricker *op. cit.* There I opted for a material conditional expressing 'competence with respect to *P*', for the prima facie reason in its favour, that it is the weakest further premise which validates the inference to '*P*'. I now hold that earlier choice to be wrong because it fails the test of epistemic independence.

[24] That it takes some care to arrive at a correct theoretical definition of trustworthiness in no way undermines this claim. The difficulty of formulating explicitly conditions of which we all have a sure implicit grasp, is the general experience with analyses of ordinary concepts.

[25] If Russell's chicken had only interpreted its feeder, her murderous intent on that last day would not have come as such a surprise!

[26] And with them, simultaneously, semantic concepts, of course. My discussion here is too brief to bring in explicitly the fact that, in any ascription of psychological states to an individual, the meaning of the sentences she utters are always, at least in principle, also in the melting pot. But nothing I say here is in neglect of this fact, which does not invalidate the argument of this section, in particular the claims that any conceptually-ensured lower bounds on false belief, and false utterance, are quite low.

[27] If considerations about interpretation do not suffice on their own to justify a default position in favour of trustworthiness, then a fortiori they do not serve to justify a PR thesis. This is one of the attempted 'positive arguments' which, in my view, does not work.

[28] My views here have been influenced by discussions with Prof. Mike Gilsenan, about his experiences as an anthropologist studying Middle Eastern societies. There is of course *much* more to be said on these matters.

[29] It is itself part of that broader domain, rather than reducing to it, in that, as already noted, semantic and psychological concepts hang together, fitting simultaneously onto a subject.

[30] See Fricker *op. cit.*, pp. 74–5.

[31] I am grateful for comments from Michael Bacharach, John Campbell, Bill Child, Dale Jamieson, Philip Pettit, and Tim Williamson. I am also particularly indebted to Arindam Chakrabarti, whose vigorous defence of the Indian view provoked this paper.

JULIE JACK

THE ROLE OF COMPREHENSION[1]

1.

Sometimes testimony merely serves to draw the hearer's attention to something in which he believes, or will shortly come to believe, on an independent basis. The hearer might for example be able to perceive the state of affairs in question or recall perceiving it. But equally there are times when a hearer comes to believe what another says and there is no basis for his belief which is independent of the testimony itself. Such occasions I call occasions of "radically informative communication."[2] The problem is to see what sort of basis for belief the hearer's confrontation with the act of speech can provide. Can we regard belief-formation here as rational, or as acquisition of knowledge, without assuming that from hearing the testimony the listener has acquired some reason for the new belief?

I will focus on the idea of an utterance which is an instance of *saying that something is so*, calling such an utterance indifferently an instance of "assertion", "testimony", or just "say-so", for short. This idea of saying provides a central core common to discourse of slightly different speech-act categories: report, statement, telling, reminding, etc. Although it could in some systems of speech conceivably coincide with the class of utterances meeting a specification like "sentence" or "indicative sentence", the category is not a purely grammatical one; context (linguistic or non-linguistic) is likely to be relevant as well as the grammar of the utterance itself. In systems where there is a contrast between "serious" or "plain" speech and fictive discourse for example, saying that something is so belongs on the side of plain speaking, and criteria for this would be contextual. A general classificatory assumption about the category can be stated as follows:

Whenever it is "anthropologically" appropriate to describe what is going on in a subject community as saying that something is so, then we have an instance of a determinate practice which is sometimes used successfully for radically informative communication, even though a given instance of the practice may not itself be an example of radically informative communication or intended as such.

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 163–193.

That could hardly serve as a definition, but I hope it enables us to view say-so as having a role which is common to systems of differing complexity.

It may seem that in ordinary situations of radically informative communication people do not in fact have reasons, whether constant in type from case to case or variable, which are good enough to affect the question whether knowledge is acquired. The thought may occur that, if we cannot see belief from assertion as knowledge when it involves no reason at all, we shall not be helped to see it as knowledge by looking at it in the light of such reasons as people are normally able to produce. In view of the doubt thus cast, it might be claimed that we have to choose between the following alternatives. Either we conclude that say-so cannot impart knowledge or else we rest the case for the claim that it *can* on a general possibility, namely that beliefs acquired by a reliable method may sometimes be lucky enough to constitute knowledge even in the absence of reasons. I don't opt for either limb of the choice just outlined, because I hold that there is a sort of reason for believing from words which makes a difference to knowledge.

As against the first limb of the choice, then, I hold that testimony can impart knowledge; as against the second, that reasons are relevant to that possibility. But my point is not that without a reason to back it, a belief can never be rational. Rather, I think, that, following Wittgenstein, we should be prepared to grant that there are circumstances in which belief can be rational, in which a person has the "right" to a given belief, in the absence of a reason.[3] With that concession in place, there is plausibility in the general assumption, which I adhere to, that when a belief is knowledge it is rational.

In uniting rationality and knowledge in this way, I am assuming rationality to be a matter of what the mind must contribute for knowledge to be possible in a given situation. This allows that the difference between knowledge and rationality could depend on whether a given judgement or assumption happens to be true, no further reason being necessary (or perhaps even possible). Any theory of knowledge which aims to apply to some everyday empirical beliefs does well to concede that reasons have to be dispensed with at some points. But would such a theory be unduly arbitrary to resist the conclusion that reasons must be dispensable at all points? The second limb of the choice I mentioned made appeal to the general possibility of getting knowledge by a reliable

method in the absence of a reason (i.e. in the absence of a reason for the belief or judgement whose knowledge-status is at stake). But this possibility can be acknowledged compatibly with claiming that there are *some* methods of knowledge which constitutively involve certain kinds of reasons. Such methods might be conceived as "causal" and as involving reason-giving states causally. And in line with the position that the gap between rationality and knowledge is in general occupied by the accident of truth in doxastic states, it could be maintained that what is required for rationality in accordance with a particular method, and for knowing things by it, depends on what sorts of judgement or assumption are constitutive of it. Knowing from say-so may be an example of such a method, and I hope that the argument of this paper will lend support to that opinion.

More specifically, my claim is that if we look at what is involved in comprehension, we shall find there a constant kind of reason. A comprehension-judgement is the sort of consideration which gets overlooked because it "goes without saying", and perhaps also because it does not function in accordance with the models of reasoning that philosophers are most used to describing. It belongs to a type of judgement which people can be wrong about – although we won't call it "comprehension" when we think they *are* wrong – and regarding which, furthermore, there exists no special first-person authority – or so I should maintain. But I claim that it makes a difference to the rationality of belief in the proposition asserted. In the account I give, a comprehension-judgement is able to function as a reason for belief because it identifies the utterance as an assertion and in so doing ascribes a certain normative or rule-like character to the utterance. This normative character yields an interpretation of the metaphor that assertion "has an aim", which is a thought we will accept if we agree with the point for which Michael Dummett has argued, that we can't know what truth is unless we know that it is the aim of assertion.[4] (Of course, such considerations about normative character could as well be applied to belief itself as to assertion.)

Prof. Matilal has most interestingly pointed out that a certain school of thought within Indian philosophy has long maintained the uniqueness of knowing from words as a form of knowledge, – its irreducibility either to perception or to inference from any other form of knowledge.[5] My position is like theirs in not entailing that knowing that *p* from

words would be perceiving that *p*. My mention of reasons may suggest that there is inference from other forms of knowledge. But the manner of support provided by the "reason" I speak of does not conform to the model of inference from "general correlations" which the philosophers of the "Uniqueness School" (as it might be called) may particularly wish to resist. And arguably the occurrent knowledge which I claim is drawn on, of the identity of utterances, is *sui generis*, i.e. not of a kind drawn on by other methods of knowledge-acquisition. Hence, there appears to be consonance in certain fundamental respects between the uniqueness thesis and the sort of reason-based view I seek to defend.

A different point, on which I do appear to depart somewhat from the opinions of the Uniqueness School, concerns the character of comprehension. The School maintains that comprehension of the words employed is a necessary part of the process by which knowledge is acquired; the auditor must have occurrent knowledge of their meaning, as they are then used. Could this knowledge be said to be propositional in form? That would not be easy to reconcile with the view that knowing that *p* can, in appropriate circumstances, result from say-so that *p* in the absence of any sort of judgement about the utterance, a view which I gather is held by some members of the School. Others would perhaps grant that the hearer must make a judgement as to what an utterance's interpretation is. Even so, I do not gather from Prof. Matilal's account that any occurrent knowledge about the utterance would need to include knowledge to the effect that it *is* a saying, assertion, or testimony that something is so. And this is a point on which, as regards the constructive side of my argument, I wish to lay particular stress. I want to maintain not only that a judgement of the presence of testimony is essential to its comprehension, but also that the rationality of taking on the new belief stems from the content of such a judgement.

Two different conceptions of "believing from" or "acceptance of" testimony are worth distinguishing.[6] (Others are not excluded). On the one hand, there is acceptance as a person's formation of the belief that *p*, when this happens in consequence of confrontation with an utterance which, in fact, is a saying that *p*. Call acceptance thus defined "Adoption Acceptance". On the other hand, there is acceptance as what I shall call "Intentional Acceptance". This I define as a person's judging, of a saying that *p*, that it is a true saying that *p*, that its speaker says truly that *p*, that it reports the fact that *p*, or something similar. (I think this is very close to "giving credence".) Clearly, these conceptions could

both apply to the same particular utterance and hearer. Can either apply when the other does not?

Consider first the question whether Adoption-Acceptance can occur in the absence of Intentional Acceptance. Here is an example to show that it can. A person comes to believe that something is going to hurt him as the result of listening to the words "This is . . . going to hurt"; so Adoption Acceptance occurs. But Intentional Acceptance does not, because the hearer thinks that the speaker is lying and at the same time suffers a hallucination, after hearing the word "is", of hearing the word "not". Here, Intentional Acceptance is absent (as defined) because the hearer has misidentified what is said, also because the hearer has not judged that the say-so is true or anything tantamount to that; in fact the hearer has judged that the speaker's say-so is false. So far, the consequences as regards the conditions for knowing from words are slight. The example just given does not show that knowing can ensue from Adoption Acceptance in the absence of Intentional Acceptance since, by ordinary intuitions, the example is not a plausible example of knowledge-acquisition. (This may be because erroneous judgements are involved in the etiology of the hearer's belief-formation.) But this fact does not show that Intentional Acceptance *is* required for knowledge, because there could conceivably be cases of Adoption Acceptance where no beliefs, right or wrong, about the nature of the utterance are involved, i.e. something like psychologically unmediated Adoption Acceptance; and nothing has been done to show that that would not be knowing from say-so.[7]

Consider now the question whether Intentional Acceptance can occur in the absence of Adoption Acceptance. It seems that it can. For example, a hearer might judge that the speaker says truly that it is raining, having just noticed for himself that it is raining. Indeed, a hearer could try to arrive at an understanding of say-so by assuming its truth and then scanning what he already believes for the truth intended: over-determination apart, Adoption Acceptance, as defined, is precluded. These are "non-adoptive" cases of Intentional Acceptance. However, I think it is true in virtue of the definitions provided that whenever Intentional Acceptance occurs in a situation of radically informative communication, we have a case of Adoption Acceptance. Turning back again to the question of knowledge, we can say the following. First, in non-adoptive instances of Intentional Acceptance, there is the possibility that a previously held belief acquires the status of knowledge for the first time.

(I shall for the most part be ignoring that possibility here, though its importance must be acknowledged.) Secondly, it has not been ruled out that adoptive cases of Intentional Acceptance may include examples of knowing from words. But it remains an open question whether the judgement involved in Intentional Acceptance would have to be present in each example of knowledge-acquisition.

That is the question I wish to take forward, i.e. whether Intentional Acceptance involves cognitive elements extraneous to the possibility of knowing from words. For reasons already touched on regarding the relation between rationality and knowledge, I am taking that to be the same question as whether it involves elements unnecessary for "rational" acceptance.

The proposition constitutive of Intentional Acceptance as defined, the judgement that the speaker has said truly that *p*, is "factive" with respect to the proposition that *p* – certainly, it entails that *p*.[8] It also in some sense or other contains the proposition that someone has *said that p*, and is factive with respect to that proposition. Hence there are two questions here as follows.

(1) If and when assertion-acceptance is rational, must the hearer make some judgement to the effect that such and such has been said?
(2) If and when assertion-acceptance is rational, must the hearer make a judgement to the effect that such and such has been said *truly*?

In adoptive cases of Intentional Acceptance, the hearer's psychological state may be a complex in which a judgement that it is said that *p* is responsible (in a certain "standard" way) for the hearer's formation of the belief that *p*; there may be no psychological element corresponding to an ascription of the concept of truth. Hence (1) appears to be the crucial and prior question for the possibility of knowledge-acquisition. It is the one I shall principally be pursuing.

As has been indicated, I will contend that awareness of an instance of saying that *p as* saying that *p* amounts to comprehension, also that the comprehension-judgement involved provides a person with a reason for believing that *p*. A *mis*identification of some utterance as a saying that *p* amounts on this view to a reason-providing *mis*understanding of the utterance, an understanding compatible with the rationality of forming the belief that *p*, though not with coming to know that *p* thereby. Such cases of belief-formation are probably regarded by common usage of "acceptance" and "credence" as cases of *would-be*, rather than actual,

credence or acceptance.[9] In any case, my point is that a (true) comprehension-judgement as described is not merely one among various reasons for belief, but a "condition of the possibility" that the new belief is an instance of knowing from words. Hence, the position is that rational belief-formation in confrontation with testimony is "reason-based".

2.

I want now to bring out into the open, so as to be able to confront them, some of the more fundamental objections to the position I seek to defend. Putting aside for the present the question of what constitutes comprehension, my position amounts to the following thesis:

Rational belief-formation from say-so that *p* involves having a particular sort of reason or reasons for believing that *p*.

The first objection I look at claims to show that any reason for belief will always be superfluous. The objection involves a *purported counter-demonstration*, which goes like this. "In the case where a hearer is familiar with the language used, the hearer is caused by a saying that *p* to have in mind the thought that *p*, on the basis of no reason. Granted this, it can be shown that any reason for belief that *p* is superfluous. The following principle (C) is a general psychological truth.

C: Upon being caused to have in mind the thought that *p*, a person will come to believe that *p*, though lacking a reason for so doing, unless he or she has active beliefs at the time which yield strong evidence against its being true that *p*.

So no identification of an utterance as a saying that *p* is needed to explain how belief-formation actually occurs, nor any other sort of reason. Furthermore, acceptance so caused can be rational, though lacking a reason, for it can fall under rationality principle (R).

R: When the thought that *p* enters ones mind, it is rational to believe that *p* if and only if the totality of one's belief state at the time does not amount to counter-evidence to it's being true that *p*.

That is the supposed counter-demonstration. I am going to attempt to dispose of it forthwith.

There is certainly some plausibility in the suggestion that say-so that

p could sometimes cause a person to have in mind the thought that *p* without that person's having acquired any reason to believe that *p*, and I don't wish to dispute that point. But I do maintain that both C and R are, as general principles, false. That C is false is clear from the existence of yes/no questions, where the thought that *p* is considered without being subscribed to. That R is false is clear from the fact that the best response to speculations which contradict each other can be that neither side is worthy of belief.

It might be maintained that C and R are true when restricted to situations in which beliefs are derived from words. But against this it is at least plausible to suggest that some feature distinctive of those situations must be recognized by the hearer. So the following question arises. Are there circumstances in which the addition to one's pre-existing total belief state of the judgement that a given utterance is an assertion that *p* can do something which is *not* accomplished by one's coming to have in mind the thought that *p*, to alter the balance rationally or causally in favour of believing *p*? There are good grounds for supposing that the answer is "yes".

On the score of causal relevance, the point seems obvious. Often say-so which is given credence is the answer to a yes/no question already considered by the hearer; in such cases, the hearer has in some sense had the thought in mind prior to acceptance without having been overwhelmed by the compulsion to believe it. A plausible diagnosis of the causal difference here is that it has to do with some belief on the hearer's part identifying the testimony. Also, people do not adopt belief in the individual disjuncts of disjunctive testimony, upon hearing them, as readily as they adopt belief in the disjunctive testimony itself, even though they are caused to have those thoughts in mind if they understand what is said. It would therefore be wrong to assume that no one ever adopts the belief that *p* upon judging that a given utterance is say-so that *p*, when he would not have adopted the belief that *p* simply on being caused to have in mind the thought that *p*.

On the score of rational relevance, something can be done to pin-point what is wrong with the claim that R must hold true for each and every belief derived from say-so. We do not regard the hearer's belief that *p* from say-so that *p* as rational provided only that the hearer lacks counter-evidence to its being the case *that p*; counter-evidence to other things must also be lacking in the hearer. If, for example, the hearer's beliefs amount to strong evidence that the speaker couldn't have known that *p*

– e.g. through the speaker's never having been in a good position to determine rationally whether *p* –, or wasn't sincere, or didn't know the meaning of the words he used, then the hearer's belief that *p* from say-so that *p* is not rational and cannot be knowledge that *p*. (The principle that you can't get knowledge from someone who doesn't know, together with the principle that the rational inquirer is interested in getting knowledge, may lie at the heart of these considerations.)[10] Now, these "defeasibility considerations" are beliefs held by the hearer which relate to the utterance in which testimony is given. Their (negative) bearing on the rationality of belief-formation suggests that we regard a hearer's judgement that an utterance is a saying that *p* as a reason the hearer has for believing that *p*, though one whose force should, rationally, be diminished by factors such as are adduced in these considerations when they arise. This would make it true that testimony-identifying beliefs can be rationally relevant to believing that *p* and differentially so, in comparison with the mere having in mind of the thought that *p*.

That finishes my reply to the objection that a reason is always superfluous. Harder to grapple with are objections to my thesis which have to do with the threat of psychological unreality on its side. I have lumped them into two groups, objections from disunity or divergence and objections from over-sophistication, and shall comment only after presenting both.

Objections from disunity appear to bear most forcibly on the claim that the same sort of reason or reasons will operate from case to case of rational belief-formation. The thesis of reason-based belief-formation may seem to require its defenders to find a common structure of reasons adequate to justify belief in every case where credence would be rational, while limiting reasons to sorts of beliefs it is plausible to suppose any rational hearer would in some sense possess and confirming that these are operative. Furthermore, in all putative cases of knowledge-acquisition, any operative reason should be true. Some of the problems here can be illustrated in connection with the question of the need for a principle of truthfulness.

It has been suggested that an assumption of the following generalization (T) may be operative in cases of rational acceptance:

T: Say-so is more often true than false.

Even if there are grounds for supposing T itself to be true, it is hard to

see how, construed in fullest generality (i.e. as applying to all sayings ever made or to be made), T could do much to justify belief-formation in any particular case. If a hearer's belief in T were relevant to acceptance in virtue of applying to some occasions of assertion but not to others, the domain of quantification would be contextually restricted. But is there any general prescription for restricting the domain of T which yields plausible results psychologically and rationally, not forgetting that in cases of knowing from words the resulting proposition must be true? An objection to restricting the domain to the speaker's assertions or to the speaker's assertions on the subject at hand, is that a hearer need not, as when asking for directions, have information about the incidence of the speaker's truthfulness, while to insist that some particular incidence of truthfulness, in a particular relevance-range relating to the topic at hand, must simply be assumed by the hearer, seems without psychological reality. It has been suggested, in a rather Cartesian style, that some consideration like T may be operative in believing from words which, once recognized, provides the ratification necessary for rationality and knowledge.[11] But this appears arbitrary because no particular incidence of veracity may be both necessary and sufficient to affect the rationality of acceptance across contexts and subject-matters. The suspicion arises that no common structure of reasons can be found, hence that there is no reason of any moderately specific sort which is common to all cases of rational credence.

There is also the threat of conceptual over-elaborateness. Concepts which are quite sophisticated may have to be ascribed to hearers of testimony. The theory will need to ascribe concepts which are additional to concepts which figure in the content of the belief derived from say-so on most occasions, and these concepts are likely to be such that a language can easily be imagined which lacks any corresponding vocabulary. As I have indicated, concepts to be ascribed on my own view include the concept of a saying that such and such is so. In that case, they have to include whatever concepts are co-implicated with say-so, which may mean that concepts of truth, well-groundedness, and sincerity have to be included. So the theory may have to maintain, either that users of the most primitive versions of natural languages could have possessed very sophisticated concepts (possibly irreducibly linguistic ones), or else that communication of knowledge did not take place in those languages. This consequence might strike some philosophers as extremely damaging to the reason-based view of belief-formation.

How good are the grounds for reservation about the availability of essential reasons? I have mentioned worries about whether there exists any fixed pattern of reasons for belief adequate to render it rational and about whether we should expect that the conceptual resources of all people participating in a practice of say-so would be "sophisticated" enough for them to have such reasons. In trying to meet these worries, the proponent of a reason-based view can offer a *policy of containment*, with three main planks. First, she can say that it is plausible on general principles that comprehension of say-so consists of a judgement identifying an utterance as an instance of saying that *p*, hence that a judgement of that sort must anyway be involved in rational belief-formation. The next section makes a start at arguing for this, and discussion of it is continued in the penultimate section. The second main claim confronts the worry about disunity in the justifying structure. The claim is that, beyond a judgement identifying an utterance as an instance of say-so, no further element is needed for a reason-based account. That is because (as I hope to make plausible) the judgement in question is the only non-derivative reason which is essential for rationality. There is no cause to deny that, as between individual cases, different *additional* considerations can be operative in acceptance and rationally required. The third main claim confronts the worry about conceptual resources, maintaining that anyone who can acquire belief under conditions of radically informative communication is likely (as I also hope to make plausible) to possess the conceptual resources for identifying utterances as instances of say-so, whether or not the language used has any corresponding vocabulary.

3.

Something on the subject of comprehension is now in order. Principally at issue has been the thesis that rational belief-formation from words involves having a particular sort of reason or reasons for believing that *p*. What can one say about comprehension if that thesis is denied?

Denial of it encompasses at least two major divisions of opinion, yielding the following theses (N1–N4). N1 is the position that some reason or other must be present in each case where acceptance is rational although no common *sort* of reason should be expected. N2 maintains the contrary, holding that a person could know that *p* from say-so that *p* while lacking any reason whatsoever to believe that *p*. N3 maintains

that certain sorts of belief, apart from the belief adopted, are essential accompaniments of rational acceptance, though none of these counts as a reason for belief-formation. N4 by contrast maintains that no further sort of belief or judgement is essential: the only cognitive state essential to knowing that *p* from say-so that *p* is belief that *p*. Adherents of any combination of N1 through N4 must deny that rational belief-formation from testimony essentially rests on any reason so specific as a judgement that such and such has been said. They must deny that a judgement identifying an utterance as an instance of say-so is involved, or else deny that the judgement in question operates as a reason.

On pain of denying (absurdly) that comprehension is required for getting knowledge from say-so, one of the following three positions about comprehension must be adopted by proponents of N1 through N4: (A) equate comprehending testimony with some form of acceptance, (B) make comprehension a cognitive state which doesn't function as a reason for belief-formation, or (C) equate comprehension with some non-cognitive, or at least non-doxastic, state.

Option (A), which claims a type-type identity between comprehension and acceptance, must be dismissed, whether we take Adoption Acceptance or Intentional Acceptance (both defined in Section 1) or indeed any other notion which involves belief in the proposition asserted, as the relevant form of acceptance. That is because comprehension does not entail believing the proposition asserted. As regards Adoption Acceptance, it cannot be maintained that comprehension consists of being caused by say-so that *p* to form the belief that *p whenever the latter occurs*, because formation of the belief that *p* from an assertion that *p* is compatible with misunderstanding, as in the example provided in Section 1, or no understanding at all. In such circumstances, moreover, belief-formation may not even count as acceptance or credence by common lights. (See note 8.) There is anyway a general ground for resisting the sort of "realization claim" whereby Adoption Acceptance constitutes one realization of comprehension, namely the thought that comprehension must be some form of occurrent knowledge about an utterance whereas the new belief in which Adoption Acceptance results (i.e. in the proposition asserted) is usually not about the utterance at all. It could with greater plausibility be claimed that comprehension is sometimes realized by Intentional Acceptance.[12] Indeed, comprehension might be held to be importantly non-autonomous (hence e.g. disjunctively realized by other psychological states), a position conso-

nant with opinions of the Uniqueness School.[13] But, because comprehension is compatible with disbelief in what is said, this could not show that comprehension is the very same thing as Intentional Acceptance. (There is a discussion of the primacy of assertion a few paragraphs on, in which this same contention resurfaces in a different setting.)

The other two options ramify somewhat and are harder to assess. Under option (B), however, it appears that comprehension is either causally as well as rationally irrelevant to belief-formation, and therefore totally epiphenomenal, or it is causally relevant, though rationally irrelevant, which makes the point of calling it a cognitive state obscure. Under (C), it would in principle be possible to equate comprehension with such a state as an intention or disposition to act in a certain way. That would render comprehension the wrong sort of reason for belief-formation but would also render it astonishingly inoperative in acceptance, at least to first appearances. A different possibility emerges under option (C) if a philosopher combines a thesis falling under N1–N4 with the claim that the hearer's *perceiving* an utterance *as* say-so that such and such is sufficient in the right circumstances to ratify belief in the proposition asserted and render it rational. (This contrasts with my own view, in that I maintain there is a *reason* but agree with this theorist that a reason for belief is itself a doxastic state). This theorist presumably holds that perceiving a given state of affairs is possible though unaccompanied by the thought that it obtains, and he might identify comprehension with such a non-conceptual, non-propositional, form of perception. That, however, would leave us without an account of the content held in common between comprehension which is in different sense modalities (e.g. hearing versus seeing a sentence-token as an assertion that *p*) and between perceptually direct and indirect (e.g. phrasebook mediated) comprehension and also of the content held in common between comprehension and *speakers'* beliefs about the character of the acts they are performing.

I have not tried to show that options (B) and (C) should be rejected and have only said enough about the fate of comprehension under those options to indicate problems. The point I wish to stress is that, unlike theses N1 through N4, the view that belief-formation is reason-based can equate comprehension of say-so with a state which is both cognitive and distinct from any state involving actual belief in the proposition asserted. That accords with the impression that comprehension constitutes a form of occurrent knowledge which underlies, and supports the

possibility of, any knowledge communicated in speech (cf. "understanding").

Many, I think, would endorse the view that comprehension of speech requires an awareness, at some stage in the process, of such utterance-characteristics as "being an assertion" "being a command", etc. They might also grant that comprehension is required for rational acceptance. But some who agree with all this would maintain that awareness of an utterance as an instance of "saying or asserting that something is so" is derivative from other kinds of knowledge. (That would defeat my claim, indicated earlier, that such identification is the only non-derivative reason essential to knowing from words.)

This raises a question on which I am now going to comment at some length, concerning the "primacy" of a judgement to the effect that a certain utterance is an instance of say-so, in the understanding of discourse. The question is whether there are more fundamental kinds of assessment of utterances from which identifications under the category of say-so must derive, or on which they must rely for their ratification. I put aside here the question whether they must rest, by way of beliefs about general correlations, on beliefs about physical properties of utterances.[14] I also put aside, in order to touch on it briefly once more in the final section, the question whether they must always be based immediately in perception.

Rather, I wish to discuss the view that such identifications must in part rest on beliefs about the speaker's psychological state. The idea might be that identification of an utterance as an assertion that *p* comes partly from the hearer's beliefs about the speaker's psychological state and partly from the hearer's judgement that the token sentence produced in the utterance can be interpreted as meaning that *p* (and perhaps that it has certain mood-indicators). A judgement identifying an utterance as say-so would on this view be secondary, as far as the epistemology of understanding was concerned.

The simplest version of the thesis that recognition of say-so is secondary in the way described is the thesis that in accepting an assertion, the hearer identifies the utterance as a performance "arising from the speaker's knowledge that *p*" (doing so partly on the basis of his recognition of the sentence uttered as "meaning that *p*), and that this constitutes identifying the utterance as an assertion that *p*. In replying to this version of non-primacy thesis, I think it can be granted that the hearer *does* actually take the utterance to arise from the speaker's

knowledge that *p* in all cases where the knowledge that *p* is acquired from words. Also, situations in which this "taking" occurs unconditioned by any other global assessment of the utterance may well be historically primary for the species and for each individual. The problem lies rather in the claim that this way of classifying an utterance is the same as classifying it as an assertion that *p*. I maintain it is not, because assertion-identification is compatible with rational disbelief in the proposition asserted. I think the main issue here is the following. Whether an utterance is such that it was *in fact* produced in the knowledge that *p*, or is such as to be *correct or appropriate* only if it was produced in the knowledge that *p*, are two different questions, and the identity of an utterance as an assertion answers much more closely to the second of these questions than the first. This shows a principle at work by appeal to which I am now going to mount a "challenge argument" against any version of the thesis that identification of assertion is secondary in the manner described.

It will be said that the non-primacy thesis can refine its account of what is involved in a hearer's awareness of an utterance as say-so, to produce an account which is compatible with the hearer's rational disbelief in what is said. And so it can. It can, for example, give an account in which the hearer must be aware of the utterance as arising from the speaker's believing (rather than knowing) that *p*, or from the speaker's intending to get the hearer to believe that *p*, or from the speaker's intending to get the hearer to believe that the speaker believes that *p*. But a general challenge can be issued, as follows. Whatever psychological state of the speaker the non-primacy theorist claims a hearer must be aware of in identification, the theorist cannot show that awareness of an utterance as an instance of saying that *p* does not at best entail something weaker (though conceptually related), namely awareness that the *correctness conditions* of the utterance require the speaker to be in that state. For the hearer's mistrust of the speaker's actually being in that state will be compatible with his awareness of the utterance as a saying that *p*.

The non-primacy, thesis, I suggest, is bound to force a division of cases between varieties of "trusting identification" and varieties of "mistrustful identification" in a way which leaves no common element of identificatory content for them to share (which distinguishes assertoric from non-assertoric utterances which "mean that *p*"). That would make identification of assertion a disjunctive state indeed. As against this, I

have been suggesting that the "internal normativity" of the concept of say-so may adequately account for whatever associative connections identification of say-so necessarily has with the speaker's state of mind.[15] Let me recapitulate in terms which concentrate on the necessary conditions for saying that something is so. The challenger, who defends the primacy of asserting, claims that examples can always be produced to show that the speaker-state proposed by the non-primacy theorist is not in fact a necessary condition of saying that *p*, or indeed of saying that *p* with full intent. A hearer could not be "aware" of the speaker-state on occasions of assertion, however infrequent, when it was not there. Surely, the challenger says, the correct identification of discourse could not require the hearer to ascribe the state to the speaker *anyway*? And the diagnosis offered by the challenger for the absurd temptation to reply "yes", is that it may merely reflect the fact that (in order to understand it) the hearer needs to be aware that the utterance belongs to a type any instance of which is wrong or inappropriate if its speaker is not in that state. The act of uttering an assertion may give rise to a "pragmatic implication" that the speaker is in that state, and we could add that the speaker is responsible for being in that state, and committed to being in that state. But it does not follow that the speaker *is* in that state. That ends my "challenge argument".

Of course, the non-primacy theorist could change tack and claim that understanding say-so can proceed without judgements identifying it *as* saying that something is so, since judgements of the sort his theory licenses will do in their place. But that would be over-hasty, for a hearer's judgement about the nature of discourse may need more independence (i.e. from the hearer's beliefs about the actual state of the speaker) than the non-primacy thesis allows, if there is to be a role for it to play as regards radically informative communication. Unless there is something which it *enables*, specifically with respect to the question whether the speaker knows that *p*, we should hesitate to grant that the theorist's kind of judgement is part of the *understanding* of discourse.

4.

I mentioned near the end of section 2 three claims making up the main planks of a defence of a "reason-based" account of knowing from words. My aim in this section is to elaborate these claims a bit, and describe certain links which they have to each other and to wider issues.

The first was the claim that comprehension of say-so that *p* involves judging that an utterance is an instance of saying that *p*. I believe that gets some support from the rational role account of comprehension developed in the next section. But it can also get some help, given assumptions about economy, from arguments to the effect that the best explanation of how knowledge is obtained from say-so will involve ascribing to the hearer a judgement which identifies the utterance as say-so.

I sketched such an argument earlier, when talking about certain "defeasibility considerations". We do not regard a hearer's forming the belief that *p* as getting knowledge that *p* if his other beliefs give him good reason to think that the speaker has said that *p* through linguistic error or that the speaker is not speaking from the belief that *p* or that the speaker has no right to believe that *p*. As I said, the existence of such defeasibility considerations might plausibly be accounted for by saying that a hearer, in coming to know that *p* from say-so, forms an attitude towards the utterance which in fact serves as an adequate reason for believing that *p* in circumstances when such defeating considerations are absent. Now the character of this reason must be appropriate to the ways it can be defeated. Taking that and other considerations into account, I wish to suggest that the postulated hearer-attitude involves *awareness of the utterance as a linguistic performance which is incorrect unless p*.[16] It is possible to provide a story which exhibits this attitude as an adequate reason for believing that *p* in appropriate circumstances, as I shall shortly attempt to show. The point of immediate relevance is that the content of this attitude makes it a good candidate for being an essential part of *what it is* to judge that a given utterance is a saying that *p*.

The second plank of my policy can be spelled out as the following combination of views, which I shall call "The Epistemic Claim":

(1) a judgement in which an assertion is identified as say-so that *p* is a reason for believing that *p*,
(2) a reason of this sort is always operative when belief from say-so is rational,
(3) it is the sole (non-derivative) such reason.

As I remarked earlier, if there is a sort of reason which is essential for rational belief-formation, it does not follow that any reason which is ever operative must be of an essential sort. Inessential reasons could crop up as support for an essential one, on the assumption that the starting

point for knowledge from words is not necessarily epistemically basic itself. Also, an essential reason could be merely presumptive, in which case operative but inessential reasons for belief could crop up as counters to circumstantial considerations tending the other way. A judgement that an utterance is an instance of saying that *p* might be viewed, along these lines, as a "Presumptive Reason" for believing that *p*.

Perhaps a few words should be said about the notion of a Presumptive Reason. It may be such as to support what it is a reason for only conditionally on intermediate assumptions, each supplying a reason for the next. If any of the linking assumptions is overthrown, the "conclusion" is no longer warranted by the presumptive reason. And given the preceding link, the full weight of proof is on the side of disclaimers to each link in the chain, although one may not be *maximally justified* in passing from one stage to the next provided only that one happens to lack defeating evidence; that would require having had opportunity to get the normal sort of counter-evidence, had it existed. I postulate that a hearer's identification of an utterance as an instance of say-so that *p* would be a Presumptive Reason for believing that *p* only *via* intermediate assumptions, the character of which would depend on the epistemic and conceptual abilities of those to whom the concept of saying is being attributed.[17]

What the degree of conceptual articulation must be at the minimum is a matter which I cannot attempt to settle on the spot. For purposes of illustration, though, a list can be given of assumptions linking the judgement that an utterance is an assertion that *p* to the belief that *p*. What is in question is a structure through which the hearer's awareness that a certain utterance is "correct only if *p*" supports formation of the belief that *p*. The linking assumptions might be: "the speaker *intended* to produce, or was aware of producing, an utterance which is correct only if *p*"; the speaker was expecting a certain mutual awareness with the hearer of the utterance as a performance which is correct only if *p*"; "the speaker was speaking in the belief that *p*"; "the speaker knew that *p*".

Assuming that there is such a thing as a standard structure in virtue of which comprehension of say-so supports belief-formation, I would expect a considered account of it (or them) to have features similar to the account sketched above, as follows. The reasons cited would be circumstantial, particular, and indeed personal. There would be a linkage or linkages where there was no entailment from one link to the next. And

in those cases, though a bridging generalization would be statable, it would have been observed not to be invariant, and the generalization would be of a sort where observations of past instances are not the principal basis for the expectation of a new one. The appeal of the whole chain would be the appeal of the default explanation of a certain kind of action, and the links would merely correspond to places where a person of appropriate conceptual and epistemic abilities would be prepared for it to break down. The chain is meant to correspond more closely to a set of dispositional sensitivities than to a movement of thought. (Operative assumptions which form the links in the chain correspond to conceptually specific dispositions to respond to certain possibilities, such for example as that the speaker "couldn't possibly have known".)

The third plank of the policy mentioned in Section 2 was the claim that participants in a genuine practice of say-so are likely to be capable of having a concept of say-so, and I would now like to mention two considerations which I think make this claim less startling. First, it is not absurd to suppose that the most primitive natural languages could *not* be used for radically informative communication and hence that their users lacked any practice worthy to be called say-so. They could have been without such a practice because of expressive limitations of their languages, which might, for example, have been unarticulated "feature-placing" languages. It would not follow from this that such systems were useless for all communicative purposes. Purposes might, for example, have resembled those of pointing – namely, the bringing about and attesting to a shared awareness of a given fact, awareness of that shared awareness, etc., in connection with co-ordination of action.

Second, the conceptual repertoire of the users of natural languages can be expected to outstrip the vocabulary of the language used, particularly in the direction of concepts of social activity (including linguistic activity). To the extent that we regard language-users as genuine agents, we will want to ascribe to them concepts to the activities in which they are engaged with others. Such concepts might be said to exist as "practical" concepts, connected with intention and perception; that is, concept-possession is manifested in activity oriented to the surroundings, where surroundings importantly include other people. It is not far-fetched to suppose that users of comparatively primitive languages have such practical concepts, even granting that the corresponding verbal concepts, usable in disengaged reflection, would rightly be regarded as sophisticated possessions.

These considerations have been offered as showing that it isn't terribly unlikely that language-users would possess an appropriate concept of saying. But if judgements applying the concept of say-so were granted to be part of *comprehension*, then the question could not be regarded as a matter of empirical likelihoods. The following Constitutivity Claim would hold:

> The possession by members of a linguistic community of a concept of saying that something is so, used in identifying speech, is constitutive of the presence in that community of a practice of assertion.

Because the Constitutivity Claim follows from a particular theory of comprehension, it's acceptability could be used to test that theory. But are there any independent grounds for accepting it? Here is one line of thought.

Looking at matters from the prospective of an anthropologist, we could not claim to have located say-so in a subject-community unless we thought that certain standards of evaluation were applicable to its instances. The anthropologist must assume that any utterance which is in fact an instance of saying that something is so is evaluable by such standards as truth, sincerity and warrant, whether or not he is in a position to make the evaluations himself. And the factual claim that these standards apply to individual utterances in a subject linguistic community rests squarely on the existence of "normative behaviour" in that community. For example, there could be no "fact of the matter" about whether utterances of a given type possessed truth-values at all (were true or false) if the behaviour of members of the subject community revealed nothing of their possessing truth as a standard. But what is involved in that sort of normative behaviour? The best view, I think, is that it is simply behaviour which is explained by judgements ascribing norms to utterances, or imputing awareness of norms to other participants in discourse. On that view, claims about the existence of a genus of significance with internal normativity are to be "anthropologically" justified by reference to the fact that norm-ascribing judgements made by members of the subject community explain their actions. In the case of say-so, I have claimed, such "norm imputing judgements" might be equatable with judgements identifying utterances as say-so or ascribing such judgements to others. (My description here assumes the internal normativity of say-so). This account of the relevant "norm-governed

behaviour" supports the Constitutivity Claim without assuming that judgements identifying utterances as say-so must qualify as comprehension-judgements, and it is to that extent independent of theories of comprehension.[18]

I said that it was possible to imagine a precursor practice to say-so, existing in a natural language which lacked a (more than accidental) capacity for commenting on the unobserved. In line with my remarks about constitutivity, I would speculate that users of such a language would have identified instances of their practice, although under a simpler conception. It could have been simpler in lacking internal normativity, or at least in lacking the full internal normativity of say-so, since in their practice unintelligibleness and falsity would have been less easily distinguishable. Their conception could also have been simpler in drawing on a relatively "unanalysable" concept of knowledge or awareness, a concept, that is, from which questions of sincerity, truth, or warrant could not be distilled.

5.

Why should comprehension of testimony take one form rather than another? Let me attempt now a slightly wider look at how comprehension and speech-significance are related and begin on it by sketching two schemes or models for relating them. The schemes are not intended to exhaust the possibilities, only to display a principled rivalry. In the first of them, the significance of an utterance is equated with the utterance's potentiality to evoke certain attitudes, including those which constitute comprehension; this I shall dub the "powers" model. In the second scheme, comprehension is equated with awareness of an utterance's significance, and (for reasons yet to emerge) I shall call it the "reasons" model. This second scheme is the one I favour; but it may seem to involve an unnecessary renunciation of cherished forms of philosophical explanation. That is why I wish to compare it with the powers model: I hope that the latter's apparent explanatory advantages will seem less compelling under closer inspection.

A word of clarification is needed now about what the expression "speech significance" is being used to stand for. As I intend the term, the significance of an utterance is its being a saying that it is raining, or its being a question whether it is raining, or a request to shut the door, or the like. Being say-so, in this usage, is a genus of speech-significance;

and a claim, for some *p*, that an utterance is an instance of saying that *p* is to be treated as a significance-claim about the utterance.

The two schemes agree in making the following assumption: if an utterance in a given natural language has a certain significance, it follows that a person with perfect mastery of the language is disposed to have certain attitudes towards the utterance in appropriate circumstances, including the attitudes (whatever they are) which constitute comprehension.

Here are the bones of the powers scheme. It adopts a "causal role" model of speech significance. The crucial feature of this is that the significance of an utterance is equated with its having the passive powers it has, *vis a vis* a certain population, to attract specific psychological reactions, including reactions of comprehension. It follows that comprehension of an utterance does not include a cognitive grasp of the totality of the utterance's significance. (For the significance of an utterance includes its power to produce the reactions needed for comprehension, and these reactions must be complete without awareness of the utterance's potentially to evoke them.) In a rough application of this to testimony, an utterance's being a saying that *p* will be equated with a set of powers it has to evoke reactions, and the theory might select, e.g., "formation of the proclivity to believe that *p*" as the reaction constituting comprehension. Now, forming a proclivity to believe that *p* is not at all the same thing as, nor could it be regarded as necessarily involving, being aware of a particular utterance's *potentiality to evoke* a proclivity to believe that *p*. So comprehension, as thus described, is compatible with being unaware, under any conception, of the utterance's having that potentiality – or that supposed significance.

Putting aside the powers scheme, here are the bones of the contrasting scheme which I wish to advocate. In the reasons model, speech-comprehension is a matter of grasping the significance of an utterance, e.g. understanding it to be testimony that it is raining, understanding its speaker to ask that the door be shut, etc. Comprehending an utterance consists of making a judgement as to its significance, e.g. a judgement that it is an assertion that Napoleon was a Corsican. In contrast to the powers scheme, significance is completely available from a participant perspective. The comprehender's judgement will ordinarily be based on perception of the utterance, but the same judgement, this time intention-linked, might be made by the speaker about his or her own utterance. This allows for the possibility of concordance between speaker

and hearer in judgements concerning a given utterance's significance. The scheme is committed to a certain negative thesis about the meaning of speech: it must deny that an utterance's significance includes its having a power to evoke comprehension (in its totality). If this power were constitutive of significance, it would be an aspect of significance which one was not aware of in comprehension, thus contradicting the original stipulation.

That completes my sketch of the rival schemes. The powers scheme is a significance-embraces-comprehension approach (in that comprehension is among the things the powers are powers to evoke), while the reasons scheme is a comprehension-embraces-significance approach (in that the content of a comprehension-judgement concerns significance). The two schemes are rivals because they must adopt differing analyses of "asserting", etc. or differing views about what counts as comprehension. The explanatory attractions of the powers model must now be looked at. I shall touch on two, the "factuality" it gives to questions of significance, and the explications it can offer regarding the character of significance.

The powers scheme can claim that the question of the existence of a certain genus of utterance-significance in the speech of a given population is something substantially "factual", in the sense of empirically discoverable. It will be a matter of finding some performance-kind which in fact has the power to evoke certain predefined reactions. The presence of the reactions may take a lot of discerning, but there is a fact of the matter as to whether they are there or not. This consideration could feed into an explanation of how it is possible for an outsider to discover the presence of a certain genus of significance. The reasons scheme will *want* to say that significance is empirically discoverable, but it apparently faces a special problem. That is to explain how there can be a "fact of the matter" regarding an utterance's significance for a significance-judgement to aim at. Unless the question of an individual utterance's actual significance is independent of any particular judgement which is made about it, the scheme appears self-defeating, since there could then be nothing for significance to be. As for comprehension, it would be misleading at best for the scheme to describe this in terms of "judgement" when such putative judgements could not be criticised for succeeding or failing to match up to anything. On that score alone they could not be such as, when correct, to constitute a form of occurrent knowledge.

It would be a mistake, I believe, to confront this problem by claiming that significance-judgements are indefeasible or incorrigible, or that they are so when made from some favoured perspective. A seems/is distinction applying to speech significance should be acknowledged and accounted for. However, despite initial appearances, I believe that theories based on the reasons scheme are at least as well equipped as theories based on the powers model to account for a seems/is distinction regarding significance, or what might be called the "external normativity" of judgements of significance. This is because the distinction should apply to insiders to as well as outsiders of a linguistic community.

The powers scheme cannot accommodate the fact that people in the subject community can at times be right or wrong, and regarded by others in their community as right or wrong, *in what they take the significance of an utterance to be*, in a way that coincides with correct or faulty understanding. Getting it right or wrong in comprehending utterances is a matter of conforming or not conforming to a regularity (suitably idealized), of even the criteria for which a member of the community could be ignorant. And getting it right or wrong about significance is a *post hoc*, theoretical matter. So an individual's being right and wrong in the two dimensions could vary independently.

Meanwhile, the reasons scheme can, I believe, allow for a seems/is distinction by claiming that the standard of correctness in judgements of significance is not, even for insiders, indissolubly linked to what the speaker or hearer actually judge, or even to what they are actually disposed to judge, about the significance of speech. Insiders have a criterion of correctness which draws on the dispositions of discriminating judges in a wider community, past and present, of users of the language being spoken. I have discussed this issue at somewhat greater length elsewhere, and this is not the place to pursue it.[19]

A second attraction of the powers scheme is that it can hope to provide some elucidation of the character of significance by reference to the fact that an utterance with a certain significance is apt to evoke reactions of a certain related form; there will be syntactic connection, but also a difference, between a description of significance and a description of the specified reactions. The reasons scheme can attempt no such elucidations since, as I have said, it identifies the content of a significance-claim, such as that a given utterance is a question whether it is raining, with the content of a comprehender's attitude of awareness. The apparently greater explanatory force of the first scheme in this respect

may account for its greater appeal to certain philosophers. But theories based on the second scheme can do a little in the way of adjudicating philosophical claims about the character of significance. They can build on the consideration that in the reasons scheme no characteristic constitutive of significance is unavailable to comprehension, supplementing their scheme with the following methodological stipulation. Speaking and responding to speech, all psychological formations and behaviour explicable in terms of a person's mastery of a natural language, in so far as this relates to the significance of utterances, must have a significance-judgement as a reason. Hence, analysis of a given form of significance should exhibit its appeal to us as a reason for certain kinds of expectation and response.

The reasons scheme does place constraints on the character of generic kinds of significance: this character is fully determined by the rational role that significance-judgements of that kind can play. The result might be called a "rational role" account of the content of comprehension. This approach does not deny that significance can be known more or less articulately or that people can be more or less reflective about the psychological background and conceptual liaisons presupposed to significance judgements. But, unlike the causal powers approach to significance, it does deny that there are any theoretician's concepts of significance, of features which are constitutive yet available only from an anthropological perspective. The conceptual content of comprehension is on this view such as to provide a suitable matrix for rational responses in a hearer. The (partial) analysis of the content of a judgement identifying an utterance as say-so that *p* which I gave earlier, and the story I gave of how such a judgement could give rise to rational belief-formation in appropriate circumstances, was intended to make it a suitable candidate for comprehension under this account. But under the rational role account, the content of a comprehension-judgement must be appropriate to *any* of the ways in which it could be operative as a reason for someone situated as hearer *or* as speaker. The analysis of "saying that *p*" which I proposed (viz as a performance which is incorrect unless *p*) was hence an attempt to exhibit the concept as having an internal normativity which could figure in a speaker's reasons for speaking as well as a hearer's reasons for such responses as credence.

Turning now to a comparatively detailed point, the reasons model does leave room for a power to be a constitutive aspect of significance, as long it is not supposed to be a power to evoke (the totality of) *comprehen-*

sion. It might clarify matters to mention a way in which this bears on the character of say-so. As I have said, a practice worthy to be called say-so, assertion, or testimony must be usable for radically informative communication. In light of this, it is an attractive view that some sort of potentiality to evoke the belief that *p* is part of "what it is to be" say-so that *p*. Under the rational role account, admitting this would mean regarding comprehension as involving awareness of this potentiality and looking for a rational role for such awareness to play. The most likely thesis would be that to comprehend say-so that *p*, it is not necessary to form the belief, or form the proclivity to believe, that *p*, but it is necessary to be aware of an utterance's power to evoke such a belief; and this awareness will serve as a reason for forming the belief that *p* (this last being a matter which lies outside comprehension proper).

That thesis corresponds closely to certain schematic aspects of Paul Grice's account of meaning, if we translate his views into the terms of the present discussion, for Grice does appear to maintain that awareness of an utterance's potentiality to evoke the belief that *p* yields reason for believing that *p* and must be present in cases of rational acceptance.[20] However, the rational role approach will in the end annex that particular thesis about the significance of say-so that *p* if, and only if, to do so yields the most satisfactory account of the content of a judgement which identifies an instance of say-so. The account must show the judgement to have a content which provides us with a reason for adopting the belief that *p* under appropriate conditions – and for anything else we characteristically regard such judgements as providing us with a reason for believing or doing. But it seems to me clear that the thesis cannot yield the most satisfactory account. Any belief-evocative power that a particular piece of testimony can be said to have it owes to the fact that somebody's comprehension of it as a saying that *p* would provide a reason for belief, a reason which doesn't concern the power. Since identification of say-so does provide one with a reason for belief which is independent of any belief-evocative power, that is what is significant; awareness of the potentiality cannot justify acceptance in any situation in which the more basic reason does not.

6.

Significance can be perceived as directly as any other aspect of things, indeed the significance of natural language utterances is essentially

"non-occult" (and necessarily perceivable; see note 17). But my account of comprehension has abstracted from perception to concentrate on judgement. One reason is that I think the best account of comprehension will exhibit it as having a content in common with the judgements speakers make, which are judgements linked directly with intention. Although the concepts involved may in fact be closely tied to perception in some way, they will not be tied to it in such a way that a judgement with that same content can only be made as a perceptual one.[21] But, it will be said, surely the method of knowing from words is a method which *itself* includes perception?

I of course acknowledge that a comprehension judgement is likely to be perception-based, that e.g. hearing an utterance as a saying that *p* is the normal case for judging that it is a saying that *p*. Also, my text is strewn with talk of "awareness" etc., which reflects my own preoccupation with the perceptual case. But again, one should, I think, allow for a shared content between comprehension-judgements which are based directly on hearing and those which are based directly on seeing, also for a shared content between either of the these kinds of judgement and more remote, interpretive, judgements concerning utterance significance (whether or not the latter are properly called judgements of "comprehension"). It may be true that all rational belief about the world rests ultimately on perception, but even so the content of most of our beliefs allows a great deal of latitude as to how, and how directly, it does so. Perhaps, then, "the" method of knowing from words, if there is such a thing, need not rest in any specific, formulaic, way on perception or perceptual belief; in any case I have adopted the position that it does not. That is, I have claimed that there is no specific sort of reason, as regards conceptual content, on which comprehension itself must rest, and no specific form of experience. (Of course I have no wish to deny that various particular locutions, such for example as "I hear-tell that . . . " may well carry specific implications about perceptual bases.)

The starting point for knowledge from words, which I claim is comprehension, may not be the ultimate starting point for a piece of knowledge. And in general it need not be assumed that, because a kind of belief is a starting point for a given method of knowledge-acquisition, therefore it is epistemically basic, either in the sense of not admitting, or in the sense of not requiring, further ratification. At the beginning of this paper I committed myself to the claim that where knowledge is at stake, sometimes a reason can be dispensed with,

sometimes not. That position will seem arbitrary unless it can produce distinguishing features of the two situations. Without being able to discuss or defend it, I would like to suggest that beliefs which can dispense with support may be distinguished by a certain sort of first-person authority in that they refer to one's own experience (see note 3).

It is *not* a matter of analogy but a matter of simple truth that perceiving an utterance in a certain way normally takes place when knowledge is derived from that utterance. Yet it is hard to resist the feeling that there *is* some close analogy between perception and knowing from words. Perhaps a comparison could be drawn which assumed that the starting point of each is epistemically basic, but, as I have said, I am not confident that the assumption would be correct as far as knowing from words is concerned. Putting that question aside, an analogy might be sought which abstracts from issues concerning the *origin* of judgements about the presence of say-so and begins with that kind of judgements. How might such an analogy go?

I have claimed that a judgement of the form "that is a saying that *p*" is a reason for acceptance, and there arises the question of an analogue for it in the formation of perceptual belief; similarly, regarding a judgement tantamount to "that is a *true* saying that *p*". (Compare "Intentional Acceptance", defined in Section 1.) The closest parallels I can think of, in terms of manner of support provided, are as follows: (i) "I seem to see a table here"/ "That is an assertion that it is raining"; (ii) "I see a table here"/ "That is an assertion of the fact that it is raining"; (iii) "There is a table here"/ "It is raining". The structure of support in moving from (i) to (iii) is similar for the two strands, in that (i) is what might be called a Presumptive Reason for (ii) and (ii) is what might be called an Inclusive Reason for (iii). The issues surrounding the acceptability of these parallels cannot be explored here. I would point out, however, that a proponent of the uniqueness thesis about testimony could grant an analogy on similar lines, because the conceptual character of the judgements in each area would remain importantly *sui generis*.

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NOTES

[1] My thanks to William Child, Arindam Chakrabarti, and José Bermudez for comments and criticism. I would like to take this occasion to express my general philosophical indebtedness to the late Michael Woods and my appreciation of his excellence.

[2] I am not assuming here that "an independent basis" is necessarily the sort of thing which provides ratification for a belief, only that it does (causally) account for it. Thus an innate belief, or anything which the hearer *already* believes can be counted, for expository purposes here, among the beliefs for which there is an independent basis. If knowledge can be imparted by words, it will not be only in situations of radically informative communication that this happens. For there is the possibility that a belief *already held* becomes knowledge for the first time when a person hears a particular utterance (Compare the systematic "reconstruction" of our beliefs on a firmer basis when they have been subjected to doubt and found to lack sufficient ratification to count as knowledge.) In the text, I provide a notion of acceptance, i.e. so-called "Intentional Acceptance" which is meant to apply in either case, and to help to account in both for the possibility that a belief is rational or constitutes knowledge.

[3] It may be possible to fill this out in terms of a notion of non-doxastic justification which is still mentalistic, along lines indicated by John Pollock in the appendix to *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, Hutchinson, 1986. (As I am using the term "reason", a reason for belief must always be a doxastic state such as judging or believing, so such ratifying bases would not themselves count as reasons.) If there are such non-doxastic mentalistic bases, and if cognitive rationality is the mind's contribution to the possibility of knowledge, and if the gap between rationality and knowledge is always filled by the truth of operative judgements or assumptions, some of the latter must refer to the bases in question.

[4] See M. A. S. Dummett, for example *Truth and Other Enigmas*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. 1978, pp. 2–4 or *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. 1973, pp. 413–417. Note 18 of this paper relates to truth.

[5] Bimal Matilal, in a paper sent to contributors.

[6] These definitions are intended merely to serve as distinct, more or less stipulative, readings of "acceptance" (cf. note 9). Neither is a *thesis* about anything or meant to do duty for a theory of the conditions under which a belief from say-so is rational or constitutes knowledge.

[7] Granted that when a *false* belief that p is operative in reaching the conclusion that q, this entails that the subject does not know that q, we cannot infer that it is necessary for the subject to have a *true* belief that p in order to know that q. One might call the kind of mistake involved in making such an inference a "fallacy of over-correction".

[8] The factiveness of an instance of p in C might be said to amount to this: any propositional constituent of C in which that instance of p is a constituent entails that p.

[9] In that case, there could in principle be examples of Adoption Acceptance (namely where an utterance is not correctly understood) which do not fall under any sense of "acceptance" in common usage. It appears that both "accepting" and "comprehending" a saying that p entail that the utterance *is* a saying that p (they are "factive" in that respect). Furthermore, the point about comprehending may explain the point about accepting.

[10] For insights grounding such principles, see Edward Craig, *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1990.

[11] See Donald Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', in Ernest Le Pore (ed.) *Truth and Interpretation*, Basil Blackwell, 1986.

[12] Note that Intentional Acceptance applies both to adoptive cases and to cases where the belief is already held; they wouldn't have to be considered distinct realizations of comprehension.

[13] A strong thesis of non-autonomy might be that what constitutes comprehension of say-so can only be specified by reference to a larger whole, for example credence. I think something on these lines would mesh with my account, but I don't attempt to make it out. A weaker thesis of non-autonomy might be that comprehension of say-so is an aspect of some limited set of alternatives and can manifest itself behaviourally only in those ways. The list might, for example, be said to consist of comprehending disbelief and Intentional Acceptance. As regards either a weaker or a stronger thesis of non-autonomy, the understanding of an unasserted occurrence of a form of words fit for assertion (e.g. a single disjunct of a disjunctive assertion) would still need to be brought into perspicuous relation with comprehension of assertion.

[14] That model, characteristic of traditional foundationalism, seems to leave us after pointless delaying tactics with the need to know something which on initial assumptions we cannot know or even understand, namely the truth of the bridging generalizations.

[15] It might be claimed that cancellation of assertoric force shows that a *de facto* as well as a normative link with psychological factors is definitive of asserting, in that assertoric force is ***absent*** when there is mutual knowledge of an intention, a mimetic intention for example, which would supplant any intention on the part of the speaker to express his own knowledge or belief. But I hazard that this opinion rests on the sort of "fallacy of over-correction" mentioned at note 7. (I discussed cancellation of assertoric force in 'Stating, Asserting, and Otherwise Subscribing', *Philosophia*, December 1981, and would still stick by much of what I said there.)

[16] This description postulates a normative "individual connection" obtaining between truth and an instance of say-so. I am maintaining that this consideration is known to anyone who is able to identify say-so and is always relevant to the rationality of belief-formation from it. It contrasts to an "aggregate connection" between truth and asserting, which supposedly obtains as a matter of the actual frequency of true assertions in the total class, whether the claim that it obtains is supported *a priori* or *a posteriori*. (See discussion of "Principle T" in Section 2.) I concede that considerations about particular frequencies could defeat other reasons for belief, but doubt that considerations about aggregate connections are essential to the rationality of acceptance. In this, I take myself to be in accord with the philosophers of the Uniqueness School and their wish to reject the idea that knowing from words involves inference from "general correlations". (It might be suggested that the aggregate connection could be converted into an individual one via talk of tendencies or propensities of individual assertions to be true. The final paragraphs of Section 5 relate.)

[17] See Gilbert Harmon, *Thought*, Princeton University Press 1973, and John Pollock, *op cit.* for the origins of (but no accountability for) this picture.

[18] The internal normativity built into the rough analysis of "saying" offered earlier was minimal. It might be claimed, further to this, that for one to have the concept, there must be a respect R such that for any *p*, if one understands an utterance to be an instance of saying that *p*, then one is aware that the utterance is correct in respect R *if p*, as well

as only if *p*. R is of course truth, and the claim therefore amounts to the position that if one has the concept of say-so, then one has at least a rudimentary concept of truth. There is also the question whether radically informative communication would be possible among people who were unable to conceptualize this dimension of assessment. If not, and if the claim connecting "saying" with "truth" is correct, there is a strong rationale for the conclusion that possession of a (practical) concept of say-so by members of a linguistic community goes hand-in-hand with the existence in that community of a practice usable for radically informative communication.

[19] 'Meaning Norms and Objectivity', P. Geach (ed.), *Logic and Ethics*, 1991 Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 167–197. There I sketch an account of the nature and identity of a natural language, viz as a sort of idealized set of perceptual dispositions (constructed out of the dispositions of authoritative users). The aim of that account is to make room for the fact that individual speakers can be wrong about significance (wrong in their "competence" so to speak, as well as their performance), while at the same time accommodating the point that the significance of utterances is something inherently perceivable.

[20] H. P. Grice, 'Meaning', *Philosophical Review*, **66** (1957), pp. 377–88.

[21] For discussion of a framework of principles within which to treat such questions, see Christopher Peacocke, *A Study of Concepts*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992.

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KNOWLEDGE BY HEARSAY[1]

1.

Language matters to epistemology for two separate reasons (although they are no doubt connected).

The first is the fact that someone who hears a remark and understands it, or reads and understands a sentence in a book or a newspaper, can thereby acquire knowledge. It is already implicit in crediting him with understanding that he knows what is being said or what has been written; what he acquires thereby is knowledge (at second hand) about the topic of the remark or sentence.

The second reason comes into view when we reflect that much of the knowledge that we have by virtue of language was surely not acquired in that first way, by understanding a linguistic production. Part of the point here is that we were not yet capable of understanding the components of what we know through language when we started to acquire them. The body of sentences that we accepted from our elders needs to have become quite comprehensive before any of them were comprehended. 'Light dawns gradually over the whole'.[2] But the image of dawning light does not apply only to coming to understand the members of a stock of sentences accepted from one's elders. The image fits a general sense in which growing into language is growing into being in possession of the world, as opposed to having a mere animal ability to cope with a habitat.[3] And much of the knowledge that enters into our possession of the world, though we have it through language, is not something we have been told. It need never have been enunciated in our hearing; rather, we find it implicit in the cognitive-practical ways of proceeding into which we were initiated when we learned our language.[4]

I have mentioned this second way in which language matters to epistemology only to make sure it is not forgotten. The topic of this paper is the first: acquiring knowledge by way of understanding what one is told.

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 195–224.

2.

I shall start with an idea of Wilfrid Sellars, that knowledge, at least on the part of rational animals, is a standing in the space of reasons.[5] This idea is what underlies the aspiration to analyse knowledge in terms of justification. Properly understood, I think the idea is correct; but I want to suggest that reflection on knowledge by testimony is a good way to start undermining a misconception of it.

The conception I want to question can be put like this. If an epistemically satisfactory standing in the space of reasons, with respect to a proposition, is mediated rather than immediate, that means that the standing is constituted by the cogency of an argument which is at its occupant's disposal, with the proposition in question as conclusion. After all, we might think in recommending such a conception to ourselves, it is precisely by laying out arguments that we delineate the shape of the space of reasons; so surely there is nothing else that a mediated standing in that space could be.

Once we accept that conception of mediated standings, we are under strong pressure to suppose that there are immediate standings in the space of reasons, since the justificatory arguments that we are envisaging must start somewhere. There is a heroic position that tries to combine the conception of mediated standings with the claim that all epistemically satisfactory standings are mediated; I sympathize with the motivation for this, and I shall come back to it (Section 5), but we need not consider it now. Apart from that option, different epistemologies in this overall vein differ in respect of the immediate standings they allow; again, I do not think we need to go into the details at this stage.

What I want to suggest is that whatever plausible candidates we pick as the available starting-points in the space of reasons, and whatever we think about whether they are, as it were, absolute starting-points or themselves mediated, to be given parallel treatment at a different point in one's overall epistemology, the basic conception of mediated standings is epistemologically disastrous, in a way that reflection on knowledge by testimony brings out.

I need first to clarify the conception of mediated standings that I have in mind. There is a completely cogent argument from the fact that someone, say, sees that things are thus and so to the conclusion that things are thus and so. But that argumentative transition cannot serve to explain how it is that the person's standing with respect to the fact that

things are thus and so is epistemically satisfactory. The concept of seeing that things are thus and so is itself the concept of an epistemically satisfactory standing with respect to the fact that things are thus and so; it makes no sense to suppose that someone might understand what it is to see that something is the case although he does not yet conceive seeing as a way of getting to know how things are. So there is no point in using the notion of a mediated epistemically satisfactory standing in such a way that it counts as having application on the basis of that kind of argumentative transition. The cogency of the argument from the fact that someone sees that things are thus and so to the fact that things are thus and so directly reflects the epistemic acceptability of the standing that we characterize as seeing that things are thus and so; it does not reveal that standing as mediated. Genuinely mediated epistemic standing, on the conception I have in mind, would have to consist in the cogency of an argument whose premisses do not beg the question of epistemic standing.

It is a truism that from the fact that someone sees something to be the case, it follows that it is the case; and a truism should be neutral between different epistemological positions. In particular, the considerations I have just given do not rule out the possibility of an epistemology in which the epistemic standing constituted by seeing that something is the case is mediated. The point is that if we want to represent it as mediated, we must not suppose that the truistic transition is the only transition in the space of reasons that is relevant to the standing's being an epistemically satisfactory one. What we must suppose, if we stick to the governing conception of mediation, is that the standing which we characterize as seeing that things are thus and so is constituted by the subject's possession of an argument from different premisses (perhaps involving how things look) to the conclusion that things are thus and so.

Now if a standing in the space of reasons with respect to a fact is acquired in hearing and understanding a remark, the standing is surely a mediated one. It is not as if the fact directly forces itself on the hearer; his rational standing with respect to it surely depends on (at least) his hearing and understanding what his informant says, and the dependence is rational, not merely causal. The question is, then, whether the conception of mediated standings that I have described can make room for testimony knowledge.

Consider a tourist in a strange city, looking for the cathedral. He

asks a passer-by, who is in fact a resident and knows where the cathedral is, for directions, hears and understands what the passer-by says, and finds the cathedral just where his informant said he would. Intuitively, this counts as a case of acquiring knowledge by being told; what makes it so is that the informant knows where the cathedral is, and passes on his knowledge in the linguistic exchange. In fact that remark encapsulates what promises to be the core of a good general account of testimony knowledge: if a knowledgeable speaker gives intelligible expression to his knowledge, it may become available at second hand to those who understand what he says.[6]

If we confine ourselves to the resources of the conception of mediated standings that I have described, can we match the intuitive verdict on the case? That would require the tourist to have at his disposal an argument to a conclusion about the whereabouts of the cathedral, with the cogency of the argument sufficient to make it plausible that his possession of this justification of the proposition amounts to an epistemically satisfactory position with respect to it.[7] I believe this is hopeless; any lifelike attempt to apply the basic thought to this case will fail to equip the tourist with an argument sufficiently compelling for him to seem to count as knowing where the cathedral is, if that is what his title to knowledge is to consist in. For our purposes, we can think of the argument as starting from what the tourist understands his interlocutor to say (we do not need to settle whether that is an absolute starting-point).[8] There is no hope of getting from there to the cathedral's being where the interlocutor said it is without ancillary premisses. And if we make the ancillary premisses seem strong enough to do the trick, it merely becomes dubious that the tourist has them at his disposal; whereas if we weaken the premisses, the doubt attaches to their capacity to transmit, across the argument, the right sort of rational acceptability for believing its conclusion to amount to knowledge.

Taking the first option, we shall look for ancillary premisses on these lines: the informant is competent (at least on the present topic) and trustworthy (at least on the present occasion).[9] But can we really say the tourist knows those things, in such a way that they are available to him as starting-points in an argument that could certify, without question-begging, his standing with respect to the whereabouts of the cathedral? Does he really know, in that kind of way, that (for instance) the supposed informant is not another tourist, equally ignorant of the city's layout, who thinks it might be fun to pretend to be a resident?[10]

In face of this, we might be tempted to take the other option, and retreat to premisses on which we might claim that our candidate knower has a firmer grip: for instance, that the apparent informant is moving about in the city without apparent hesitation, that he displays no signs of being engaged in a practical joke (like suppressed giggles), and so forth. But if the candidate knower's grip on the premisses to which we retreat is supposed to be firmer by virtue of their being weaker, so that they leave it open that the apparent informant is an ignorant practical joker, as opposed to someone who is putting his own knowledge into words (although no doubt they reveal it as improbable), it should be an urgent question how the argument can be good enough for possession of it to constitute an epistemic position sufficiently satisfactory to count as knowledge. If the tourist's title to know consists in the best argument he can muster for the proposition he believes, and the premisses of the argument leave it open that his supposed informant is not giving expression to knowledge, then surely the verdict ought to be that for all the tourist knows the cathedral is somewhere else.

There may be a temptation to say that I have simply chosen an unfortunate example; the tourist does not know where the cathedral is, but if one is more careful to equip oneself with the needed premisses about competence and trustworthiness, one can acquire knowledge by being told things.[11] I think that assessment of the case of the trusting tourist is counter-intuitive, but that is not by itself conclusive against it; we can allow a good general account of what knowledge is to alter our intuitions about particular cases. However, the difficulty is more general than that move acknowledges. Consider a different case of putatively acquiring knowledge by testimony. Let it be the most favourable case we can imagine. Let the hearer have all kinds of positive evidence that the speaker is speaking his mind: a steady honest-looking gaze, a firm dry handclasp, perhaps years of mutual reliance. Surely it is always possible for a human being to act capriciously, out of character? And even if the speaker is speaking his mind, how firm a hold can the hearer possibly have on the needed premiss that the speaker is not somehow misinformed about the subject matter of the conversation? However favourable the case, can the hearer really be said to know that his informant can be relied on now, in such a way that this verdict can be used in a non-question-begging certification that what he has acquired is an epistemically satisfactory standing? The supposition that the informant is, perhaps uncharacteristically, misleading the

hearer or, perhaps surprisingly, misinformed about the topic is not like the typical suppositions of general sceptical arguments (like 'Maybe you are a brain in a vat'), where it is at least arguable that no real possibility is expressed. In Simon Blackburn's phrase, mistakes and deceptions by putative informants are 'kinds of thing that happen'.[12] It is not clear that the approach I am considering can make out the title to count as knowledge of any beliefs acquired from someone else's say-so. And too much overturning of intuitions must surely make it questionable whether the general account of knowledge is a good one.

3.

I have been exploiting a principle to this effect: if we want to be able to suppose that the title of a belief to count as knowledge is constituted by the believer's possession of an argument to its truth, then it had better not be the case that the best argument he has at his disposal leaves it open that things are not as he believes them to be. If it does, what we are picturing is an epistemic position in which, for all the subject knows, things are not as he takes them to be; and that is not a picture of something that might intelligibly amount to knowing that they are that way. The argument would need to be conclusive: if you know something, you cannot be wrong about it.

That principle strikes me as obviously correct. But many philosophers do not even entertain the idea. Their attitude reflects an assumption, which encapsulates the approach to knowledge which I am considering, that when epistemic standing is mediated, the antecedent of the conditional is satisfied. With that assumption in place, the effect of the principle is an intolerable scepticism in respect of mediated epistemic standings, since the arguments we can find are almost never that good; some form of the principle is indeed the nerve of standard arguments for scepticism. Accordingly, if we do not contemplate querying the antecedent, it seems that, on pain of scepticism, it must be possible for a title to knowledge to consist in possession of a less than conclusive argument for what is known – that an argument that does no better than reveal its conclusion to be highly probable can be good enough to certify a standing with respect to the conclusion as knowledge. In fact that is a quite mysterious thought, given what I think is spurious plausibility by the idea that the only alternative is scepticism. And we can keep the conditional principle without risking undue concessions to scepticism

if we are willing to contemplate denying that in respect of mediated epistemic standings the antecedent must hold.[13]

4.

Consider a device about which one knows (unproblematically, let us suppose) that it will produce outcome A in, on average, ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and otherwise outcome B. Think of a roulette wheel with ninety-nine red slots and one white one. Given the task of predicting the outcome of a given spin, one will of course predict red (even if white is 'overdue', since that does not make the probability of white on any one spin any greater). Suppose one makes one's prediction, the wheel is spun, and the result is red. Did one's prediction then amount to knowledge? Surely not: for all one knew, the result was going to be white. The fact that one had an argument that established a high probability for the outcome that one predicted – so that one had excellent reasons for one's prediction – makes no difference at all to that. We can alter the example to make the probability higher, but I cannot see how changing the figures can make any difference of principle: if there is one white slot out of thousands or millions, one does not know that the result will not be white.[14] I think the moral is that being known (a property of propositions) cannot be intelligibly seen as some region at the high end of a scale of probabilification by considerations at the knower's disposal, perhaps with room for argument about how high the standards need to be set. Of course that is an application of the conditional principle which I discussed in the last section.

It is instructive to contrast the roulette-wheel case with the following one. Consider someone who keeps himself reasonably well up-to-date on events of note; suppose he listens to a reliable radio news broadcast at six every evening. Can we credit such a person, at three in the afternoon on some day late in the life of, say, Winston Churchill, with knowledge that Churchill is alive? (I do not mean to consider a period when the news is full of bulletins of Churchill's failing health; Churchill has simply not been in the news lately.) Intuitively, the answer is 'Yes'. In fact something like this is the position we are all in with respect to masses of what we take ourselves to know, concerning reasonably durable but impermanent states of affairs to whose continued obtaining we have only intermittent epistemic access. If challenged, we might say something like 'If it were no longer so, I would have heard about it'; and

we are quite undisturbed, at least until philosophy breaks out, by the time-lag between changes in such states of affairs and our hearing about them. Of course it matters that the time-lag is quite short; we would not claim to know this kind of thing after months out of touch with the news.[15]

We can think of the subject in such a case as, in effect, following a policy of claiming to know (if the question arises) that things are still the way he formerly knew they were, if a change would have been reported and has not yet been.[16] A subject who follows that policy can be sure that there will be a period, between Churchill's death and the next news bulletin, when following it will produce claims to knowledge that are definitely false; and that may not by itself deter him from following the policy. No doubt if Churchill is known to be in failing health, a reasonably cautious subject will not go on taking Churchill to be still alive; asked whether Churchill is still alive, a doxastically responsible subject in such circumstances will answer that he does not know. But suppose Churchill dies unexpectedly, so that there is not that sort of specific reason for suspending the policy. And suppose our subject follows the policy to the end, so that he is committed to false knowledge claims, since what he claims to know is not so, for the period between Churchill's death and his next access to the news. According to my intuition, the falsity of these late products of the policy does not undermine the truth of its earlier products; as long as Churchill was still alive, the subject knew it.

That intuition does not seem unreasonable. It would be difficult to overstate how much of what ordinarily passes for knowledge would be lost to us if we refused to adopt an epistemology of retained knowledge which allowed that sort of knowably risky policy to issue in acceptable knowledge claims when the risks do not materialize. I think I know, as I write, that George Bush is President of the United States; but can I rule out the possibility that, since my last confirmatory experience, he has been assassinated, and even at this moment the Chief Justice is swearing in his successor? No. But even so, when I have my next confirmatory experience, I shall not take it that I then know *again* that Bush is President, having not known it in the interim; I shall take the experience to confirm that I *still* know it – to confirm the continued existence of a piece of knowledge which I shall take myself to have had all along, including now as I write. All my supposed knowledge of impermanent circumstances in the realm of current affairs is, most

of the time, between confirmations. If we reject the intuition I have expressed, we shall be committed to supposing that we know a great deal less than we ordinarily think.[17]

I have been using examples involving retention of knowledge that was first acquired by testimony, in the broad sense in which one acquires knowledge by testimony in listening to a news broadcast or reading a newspaper. But the point is obviously not restricted to such cases. Consider a child at school. Does she know the arrangement of the furniture in the living room of her house? We are inclined to answer that she probably does: most people know that sort of thing. But what if, after she left home, her parents acted on the whim of trying a different arrangement? Well, in that case she does not know. But if it is still in the familiar places when she gets home at the end of the school day, then, according to my intuition, that confirms that she *still* has the knowledge that she had when she left the house in the morning. She does not need to acquire anew a piece of knowledge that has gone out of existence in the interim.[18] (Rather as with the occurrence of bulletins on Churchill's failing health, the case is altered if the parents have lately been, say, talking about improving the layout – in such circumstances, taking the furniture to be where it has always been might be doxastically irresponsible.)

Suppose that in the case of the roulette wheel one were to follow the policy of claiming to know, at each spin, that the outcome will be red. That would be a policy about which one would be in a position to know that, on some occasions (on average one in a hundred, in the case as first introduced), it would issue in one's making a knowledge claim that is certainly false, since what one claims to know is not so. Now when one claims to know, between confirming episodes, such things as that George Bush is President, one in effect follows a knowledge-claiming policy that is parallel to that one, in a certain formal respect. (It would be silly to try to give definite numbers, but why should that matter?) But the intuition I am expressing discerns a substantive difference beneath the structural parallel: in the roulette-wheel case, *none* of the knowledge claims would be true (in fact no sane person would seriously adopt such a policy), whereas in the case of claims to retained knowledge, those which are not falsified by the falsity of what one claims to know can be true, even though the policy of issuing them in the relevant sort of circumstances will certainly yield some that are so falsified.

That intuitive difference does not seem to be one which we can make intelligible in terms of the subject's possessing a better argument, of the sort that the governing conception would need to cite for purposes of non-question-begging certification of his epistemic standing, in the favourable case. It may be that on the basis of material available for constructing such arguments, it is a better bet that Bush is President, between confirming episodes, than it is that the roulette wheel will come up red. But that does not seem to be the right kind of point. If we change the roulette-wheel case to give white one chance in millions, we may make the comparison of bets at least less clear; but it still does not seem right to say that I know that the wheel will come up red, and it does seem right to say that if it turns out when I next tune into the news that Bush was still President as I wrote this, it will have turned out that I do now know that he is.[19]

What the intuition suggests is that we conceive knowledge of the right kind of truth as a sort of continuant. With fully eternal truths, such a conception is unproblematic; but the intuition indicates that we extend the conception, more interestingly, to knowledge of changeable, though reasonably durable, states of affairs. Like a living thing, such knowledge needs something analogous to nutrition from time to time, in the shape of intermittent confirmation that the state of affairs known to obtain does still obtain. But the persistence of knowledge does not need the constant operation of a sustaining cause; between the intermittent confirmations, we allow a kind of inertia to operate in the dynamics of epistemic life. If someone counts, at some time, as having a state of affairs of the right kind within his cognitive grasp, say by seeing that things are thus and so, we allow that that epistemic status can outlast the original mode of access to the known fact. We can capture the credentials of his epistemic position, at a later time at which he no longer has the state of affairs in view, by saying that he retains a piece of knowledge originally acquired by perception. Of course that cannot be so if the state of affairs no longer obtains; but if the state of affairs does still obtain, he can continue to count, at least for a while, as having it within his cognitive grasp.

It is very hard to see how the governing conception of mediated standings in the space of reasons can make room for such an idea. Perhaps the governing conception can make some sort of stab at a lifelike account of my epistemic credentials with respect to the proposition that Bush is President while I am, say, watching a White House press conference

on live television. But it does not seem to be able to make sense of the idea that those very credentials (reinforcing an accumulation of credentials from the remoter past) can persist after the set is switched off. How can a justification I no longer have (the screen is dark) be parlayed into a justification I somehow still have? Perhaps I can add material about the reliability of my memory; but that does not address the possibility, which is left open if my present information is not allowed to include the fact itself, that since my latest confirmation the state of affairs itself has changed. It would not be a fault in my memory if that had happened. That is why it makes such a difference to shift from retained knowledge of standing states of affairs to retained knowledge of states of affairs which may stop obtaining between confirmations: the shift undermines all hope of constructing an argument from what I have between confirmations – if that is not allowed to include my still being onto the fact itself – sufficiently cogent to serve the purposes of the governing conception.[20]

If I am allowed, contrary to the governing conception, to say that my continuing knowledge that Bush is President is itself the relevant standing in the state of reasons, these difficulties go away. The justification I still have, for saying that Bush is President, is that I still know he is: I achieved, in whatever way, an epistemically satisfactory position with respect to the fact that he is President, a position of a sort that can persist between injections of nourishment, and now the darkness of the television screen does not imply that anything relevant to that position has changed.

5.

If knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons, someone whose taking things to be thus and so is a case of knowledge must have a reason (a justification) for taking things to be that way. But that is allowed for if remembering that Bush is President is itself the relevant standing in the space of reasons. Someone who remembers that things are a certain way, like someone who sees that things are a certain way, has an excellent reason for taking it that things are that way: the excellence comes out in the fact that from the premiss that one remembers that things are thus and so, as from the premiss that one sees that things are thus and so, it follows that things are thus and so.[21] The epistemic positions themselves put their occupants in possession of reasons for their beliefs;

those reasons do not need to be supplemented with less cogent arguments from non-question-beggingly available premisses.

As I noted in Section 2, the availability of an inference from an epistemic position to a fact does nothing towards representing the epistemic position as a mediated standing in the space of reasons. It seems clear that knowing that Bush is President cannot be a rationally immediate matter; so if we stick to the governing conception of what a mediated standing in the space of reasons is, we have to suppose that the standing constituted by remembering that Bush is President can be reconstructed as possession of an argument which starts from the content of informational states that we can credit to the subject without presupposing that he has that standing. The point of Section 4 is that at the relevant times no available argument will be good enough; the best it can yield is high probability, but we wanted to reconstruct knowledge that Bush is President, not knowledge that he probably is.

It should be starting to seem that the governing conception misconstrues the idea that knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons. I do not want to suggest that the inferential transitions which the governing conception aims to exploit in its reconstructive task are epistemologically irrelevant; only that their relevance needs to be differently understood.

Suppose one has become informed of some impermanent but durable state of affairs, and goes on taking it to obtain after one's original epistemic access to it has lapsed. I do not claim that if the state of affairs still obtains then, come what may, one's continued taking it to be so amounts to knowledge. On the contrary: one's status as a knower is undermined, even if things still are as one takes them to be, if one's taking things to be that way is, as I put it, doxastically irresponsible. We have seen some examples of how the notion of doxastic responsibility (which is surely perfectly intuitive) works. It is doxastically irresponsible to go on taking it that some state of affairs of the right kind still obtains if the interval since one's last confirmation is too long, or more generally if the intervals between confirmations are too long, say if one has missed the news for an excessive period.[22] It is doxastically irresponsible to take it, between confirmations, that some state of affairs still obtains, even one of the right general kind, if one is in a position to know that its persistence is hanging by a thread, as in the case of the bulletins about Churchill's failing health.[23]

If one's takings of things to be thus and so are to be cases of knowledge, they must be sensitive to the requirements of doxastic respon-

sibility. Since following the dictates of doxastic responsibility is obviously an exercise of rationality, this can be a partial interpretation of the thought that knowledge in general, and the specific epistemic positions like remembering and seeing, are standings in the space of reasons. We could not conceive remembering that things are thus and so, say, as a standing in the space of reasons if a subject could count as being in that position even if he were not responsive to the rational force of independently available considerations – the material to which the governing conception appeals. But we can separate that point from the idea that one can reconstruct the epistemic satisfactoriness of the standing in terms of the rational force of those considerations.

What I am proposing is a different conception of what it is for a standing in the space of reasons to be mediated. A standing in the space of reasons can be mediated by the rational force of surrounding considerations in that the concept of that standing cannot be applied to a subject who is not responsive to that rational force. But that is not to say that the epistemic satisfactoriness of the standing consists in that rational force. I think we should apply this distinction to all the specific epistemic standings with respect to the empirical world: not just remembering, but also the various modes of perceiving (and testimony too, to anticipate). We could not conceive seeing (say) that things are thus and so as a standing in the space of reasons if a subject could count as being in that position even if he were not rationally responsive to the bearing of how things look on the question how things are. Here too there are requirements of doxastic responsibility.[24] And that is quite distinct from the idea, which the history of epistemology surely shows to be hopeless, that we can reconstruct the epistemic satisfactoriness of seeing in terms of the cogency of an argument from how things look to how they are.

On this account, seeing that things are thus and so is a standing in the space of reasons no less mediated than any other; what makes a standing mediated is not that its epistemic satisfactoriness consists in the compellingness of an argument from the mediating considerations, but that it could not be a position in the space of reasons at all if a subject could occupy it without being rationally responsive to the mediating considerations. This brings us to the position which I mentioned with sympathy in Section 2, according to which there are no immediate standings in the space of reasons – no absolute starting-points. An absolute starting-point would be a position in the space of reasons that

one could occupy without needing a suitable rational sensitivity to its surroundings; and seeing is not such a position. Indeed, it should now be apparent that nothing is. It does not help to retreat from seeing that things are thus and so to having it look to one as if things are thus and so; that is not a position one could occupy all on its own, without a rational responsiveness to surrounding considerations.[25]

In the context of the governing conception of what it would be for a standing to be mediated, the thought that there are no absolute starting-points seemed heroic. It amounted to the idea that a rational standing with respect to one proposition is inferentially derivative from rational standings with respect to others, in such a way that when we set out to establish such standing by retracing the inferential steps we would go round in circles; large circles, no doubt, but it is quite unclear why that should seem to help. But now that we have it in the proper context, with inferential transitions in the required background but not conceived as constituting the satisfactoriness of rational standings, I think the position emerges as acceptable.[26]

Of course I am not suggesting that doxastic responsibility ensures that what one has is knowledge. Exactly not: that would preclude making room for knowledge in cases where a maximally careful exercise of doxastic responsibility still leaves it open that the world may be playing one false, as in the examples of Section 4: the state of affairs improbably ceases to obtain. What one takes to be the case without doxastic irresponsibility may even so – through no fault of one's doxastic conduct – not be the case, and then one certainly does not know that it is the case.

That may suggest that doxastic responsibility suffices for knowledge, given that the world co-operates – given that what one takes to be so is so. But that seems wrong too. Consider a case in which there is no doxastic irresponsibility in, say, taking an apparent perception at face value, and things are indeed as they appear, but the apparent perception is not a genuine perception for lack of the appropriate relation between the fact and the experience; in such a case, taking the apparent perception at face value ought not to constitute knowledge. It seems over-optimistic about the efficacy of doxastic responsibility to suppose that a believer who was really doxastically responsible would not miss the fact that the required relation did not obtain. Similarly if there is no doxastic irresponsibility in taking another person's word on some question, and what he says is true, but his saying it is not an expression of knowledge on his part. (I shall return to the idea that knowledge

is to be understood as a co-operative product, involving our exercising doxastic responsibility and the world doing its part, in Section 7 below.)

In the framework I am proposing, we can have a satisfying view of how probabilities are epistemologically significant. As long as we are trying to reconstruct epistemic standing in terms of an argument from non-question-beggingly available starting-points to the proposition supposedly known, it is an embarrassment if the best we can achieve is an argument that represents the proposition as merely probable. But there is no such embarrassment if the point is that one cannot count as occupying an epistemic standing with respect to a proposition unless, in taking things to be so, one is responsive to what is probable given one's informational position apart from the putative epistemic standing; that is because flying in the face of those probabilities is one way to be doxastically irresponsible, which would undermine one's title to the position in the space of reasons that the epistemic standing is.

The epistemic satisfactoriness of the standings in the space of reasons constituted by positions like seeing that things are thus and so, or remembering that things are thus and so, is captured not by these requirements for them to be standings in the space of reasons at all, but by the cogency of the inference from someone's being in such a position to the fact that things are thus and so. If the positions so designated are really to be standings in the space of reasons, we must insist on a strict reading of the 'that' clauses, as crediting the positions with conceptually structured contents; that is what the requirement of rational sensitivity to mediating considerations makes room for. But creatures that are not in the space of reasons – the space of concepts – can perceive and remember (and indeed learn through words: as I noted in Section 1, one starts doing that before one understands the words). It goes with being restrictive about conceptually structured content that we cannot employ the very same notion of factiveness in connection with the states that result from such non-rational or pre-rational capacities; that is part of the point of the idea that language, in initiating subjects into the space of reasons, puts them in possession of the world, which needs to be distinguished from a mere ability to live competently in a habitat. But the capacities are at least, as it were, pre-factive: that the states that result from them, once they are taken into the space of reasons, are going to be factive is in the nature of the capacities even as pre-rationally exercised. Now the epistemological role of the rational sensitivities that I have summed up under the head of doxastic responsibility is to cash out that idea of

taking cognitive capacities into the space of reasons – to supply a background that must be in place if we are to take the 'that' clauses strictly. Factiveness then takes care of itself. Or at any rate, if more needs to be said, it is not about the space of reasons; it is about the capacities, whether exercised in the space of reasons or not. The style of epistemology that I am attacking goes wrong in trying to make the inferential linkages to which doxastic responsibility requires us to be responsive serve, not just as the necessary background for talking of positions in the space of reasons at all, but also in a task they cannot perform, and need not have been expected to perform: ensuring factiveness, ensuring the excellence of the argument from someone's being in one of the relevant positions to the world's being as he takes it to be.

6.

We can now return to the epistemology of testimony.[27] I make no apology for spending so long elsewhere: the upshot is that we now have, on a reasonably independent basis, a general epistemological framework into which we can see how to fit such knowledge.

The epistemic standing one can acquire in conversation is that of having heard from one's interlocutor that things are thus and so.[28] One cannot count as having heard from someone that things are thus and so unless, by virtue of understanding what the person says, one is in a position to know that things are that way. If it turns out that things are not that way, or that although they are, the person from whom one took oneself to have heard it did not know it, one cannot persist in the claim that one heard from him that things are that way, but must retreat to the claim that one heard him say that they are. Just as one can capture a knower's justification for believing what he does by saying that he sees that things are thus and so, or that he remembers that things are thus and so, so one can capture a knower's justification – his knowledge-constituting standing in the space of reasons – by saying that he has heard from so-and-so that things are thus and so.[29]

We can protect the idea that acquiring knowledge by testimony is not a mindless reception of something which has nothing to do with rationality, but yields a standing in the space of reasons, by insisting that the knowledge is available to be picked up only by someone whose taking the speaker's word for it is not doxastically irresponsible. That insistence works in much the same way as the parallel insistence in the

case of retained knowledge and perception. A person sufficiently responsible to count as having achieved epistemic standing from someone else's words needs to be aware of how knowledge can be had from others, and rationally responsive to considerations whose relevance that awareness embodies. That requires him to form beliefs on the say-so of others in a way that is rationally shaped by an understanding of, among other things, the risks to which one subjects oneself in accepting what people say.[30] There are thus plenty of ways in which it can be doxastically irresponsible to believe someone, so that even if the other is giving expression to his knowledge on the subject, knowledge is not to be had by believing him.[31] But although it is obviously doxastically irresponsible to believe someone about whom one has positive reason to believe he is not trustworthy, or not likely to be informed about the subject matter of the conversation, doxastic responsibility need not require positive reasons to believe that an apparent informant is informed and speaking his mind; here as elsewhere, it need not be doxastically irresponsible to run known risks in one's taking things to be thus and so. That makes room for knowledge in cases like that of the trusting tourist (Section 2).

As before, the inferential relations in which what one comes to believe stands to the content of informational states with which one can be credited without presupposing that what one acquires is knowledge do not serve to reconstruct one's standing with respect to that proposition in terms of the cogency of an argument for it that one has at one's disposal; rather, they constitute a rational structure to which one must be sufficiently responsive, largely in the negative way that one must not fly in the face of its revelations about belief-worthiness, if one is to be capable of being credited with that standing.[32]

There is scope for some subtlety about the way in which considerations of doxastic responsibility restrict the occasions on which one can pick up knowledge from testimony. Consider the story of the boy who cried 'Wolf'. After a long succession of frivolous cries, those who knew the boy were rendered unable to derive knowledge of the presence of a wolf from him, even on an occasion when his cry really was an expression of knowledge; it would have been doxastically irresponsible for them to take his word for it. But what if a stranger happened to be the only audience on the one occasion on which the boy's cry of 'Wolf' did express knowledge? (The point of making him the only audience is to exclude his having indirect evidence of unreliability, in the form

of sighs of 'There he goes again' and so forth.) The apparatus I am recommending allows us to entertain the idea that the stranger might acquire knowledge from the boy; the stranger's epistemic position is quite like that of the trusting tourist. I do not find such a possibility obviously offensive to intuition.[33] The case would be one in which something which might otherwise be an opportunity for the acquisition of knowledge is closed to those who know too much.[34]

The idea is, then, that one's epistemic standing with respect to what one comes to know by testimony consists in one's, say, having heard from one's informant that that is how things are; not in the compellingness of an argument to the conclusion that that is how things are from the content of a lesser informational state. Not that the subject does not enjoy a lesser informational state. It cannot be true that he heard from so-and-so that things are thus and so unless it is true that he heard so-and-so say that things are that way – a truth that leaves it entirely open whether things are that way. Moreover, that lesser state is relevant to the standing in the space of reasons that we ascribe by attributing the more demanding state. But it is not true that the only way the lesser state can have such relevance is that its content figures in an argument at the knower's disposal for the proposition he is said to believe.[35]

Compare the fact that one cannot see that things are thus and so unless it looks to one as if things are that way. Here again, the lesser informational state is relevant (rationally, not just causally) to the standing in the space of reasons that we ascribe by attributing the more demanding state. And in this case, we are familiar with the thought (I mentioned it in Section 5 above) that it is epistemologically hopeless to capture that relevance by trying to reconstruct the epistemic standing constituted by seeing that things are thus and so out of a supposedly strong enough argument for their being that way, at the subject's disposal by virtue of its looking to him as if things are that way.

If we are not to explain the fact that having heard from someone that things are thus and so is an epistemic standing by appealing to the strength of an argument that things are that way, available to the hearer by virtue of his having heard his interlocutor say that they are, do we need some other account of it? I would be tempted to maintain that we do not. The idea of knowledge by testimony is that if a knower gives intelligible expression to his knowledge, he puts it into the public domain, where it can be picked up by those who can understand the expression, as long as the opportunity is not closed to them because it would be

doxastically irresponsible to believe the speaker. That idea seems obvious enough to stand on its own epistemological feet; the formulation makes as much sense of the idea that knowledge can be transmitted from one subject to another as any purported explanation could hope to confer on it.[36]

Supposing I were to grant that we do need more, I would maintain that what we need is an elaboration of points like this: in speaking in such a way as to commit oneself to the truth of what one says, one entitles one's audience to repeat what one says with an authority derivative from one's own, so that if the audience repeats it and is challenged, he has the right to refer the challenge to the original speaker.[37] Claims of that sort make it fully intelligible (if explanation is needed) how, if the authority of the original speaker was that of a knower, that same status can be inherited by a comprehending audience.

Notice that that sketch of an explanation of how it can be that knowledge is transmitted in linguistic exchange simply uses the idea of epistemic authority; it does not aim to explain how it can be that knowledge is transmitted by showing that some reductive account of epistemic authority applies alike both to the original speaker (who may derive his authority from, for instance, perception) and the audience who learns from him.

7.

Two subjects who are candidates for being credited with a given mode of epistemic standing can be alike in respect of informational states that are attributable to them without begging that question, while one of them enjoys the epistemic standing and the other does not. For instance, it can be true of each that he has heard someone whose word he has no reason to doubt say that something is the case; we could tell a detailed story in which the arguments at their disposal to what they are candidates for being said to know, from the contents of the informational states that are non-question-beggingly attributable to them, are equally strong. But my point has been that such arguments always leave open a possibility that their conclusion is false. (That is one way of putting a perennial complaint of sceptics; my aim has been to describe a style of epistemological thinking which deprives the point of sceptical implications.) The inconclusiveness of the arguments guarantees that there can be paired cases in which such a detailed story can

be told and only one of the subjects knows; the other does not, because things are not the way he takes them to be. There is also the possibility that, although things are that way, his informant did not know it.

I claim that these differences, outside the respect in which the subjects match, can make it the case that one of them knows and the other does not. It may seem that this marks out the style of epistemology that I am recommending as belonging to a familiar genre, involving a mix of 'internalist' and 'externalist' elements.[38] But that would miss my point.

A mixed or hybrid epistemology takes it that the non-question-beggingly attributable informational states, and whatever can be reached by inference from their content, are part of what constitutes a subject's epistemic standing – in fact, the whole of what is contributed to his epistemic standing by his moves and positions in the space of reasons. That material does not seem to suffice for knowledge; and the hybrid epistemology is an alternative to brazening out the claim that it does suffice – that a less than conclusive argument can be good enough for possession of it to constitute a mediated epistemically satisfactory standing (cf. Section 3). Instead, the hybrid epistemology appeals to facts in the world, outside the subject's moves and positions in the space of reasons, in order to finish the job of constituting his epistemic standing.

But the epistemological outlook that I am recommending does not accept that restricted conception of the subject's moves and positions in the space of reasons. Standings in the space of reasons are not limited to the non-question-beggingly attributable informational states, plus good standing with respect to whatever a doxastically responsible subject can infer from the contents of those states. Rather, the subject's standing in the space of reasons, in the favourable case, is his having heard from the informant that things are thus and so; and that leaves no extra constitutive work to be done by an external condition. The epistemic position, having heard from someone that things are thus and so, is a standing in the space of reasons in its own right, rather than a position which one can be in by virtue of a standing in the space of reasons when (an extra condition) things are indeed thus and so. (Similarly with the other epistemic positions: seeing that things are thus and so, remembering that they are, or were, thus and so, and so forth.)

Why does it seem that we need a mix of internalist and externalist elements in the theory of knowledge? The context is the intuition that knowledge has something to do with satisfactory positions in the space

of reasons; the externalist admixture is dictated by the supposed perception that knowledge cannot simply be such a satisfactory position. (Externalism as an element in a hybrid conception of knowledge needs to be distinguished from the outright externalism which simply abandons the idea of positions in the space of reasons.) In many areas where we are inclined to claim and attribute knowledge, no policy or method of having one's belief-formation determined by reasons available to one is free from the risk of serving up false beliefs. (I leave aside the super-cautious policy of forming no beliefs at all; the feasibility of this policy is too dubious for its freedom from risk of falsehood to be much comfort.) That ineliminable riskiness is hard to combine with the thought that reason ought to be self-sufficient, that whether one is in a satisfactory position in the space of reasons ought to be immune to luck – not in the sense of sheer chance, but in the sense of factors that reason cannot control, or control for. One familiar upshot of this thought is a 'Cartesian' or sceptical shrinking of what can be known. The hybrid conception of knowledge can seem to be the only alternative.

The attraction of focusing on the restricted informational states is that they, together with what a doxastically responsible subject can infer from their contents, seem to constitute a province within which reason's control over a subject's rational status is not threatened by luck. The idea is that as long as a subject believes only what his restricted informational states give him reason to believe, with the degree of credence he gives to each proposition determined by the strength of the argument which his restricted informational states put at his disposal, he will be rationally blameless.[39] If a proposition to which he gives the degree of credence that is warranted by his restricted informational state turns out to be false, that is the world's fault, not a defect in his rational position.[40] But given the ineliminable riskiness we began with, a subject's position in the supposed luck-free zone cannot suffice for knowledge of a state of affairs of one of the problematic kinds. So it seems compulsory to inject an externalist element into the theory of knowledge. Once the idea of a standing in the space of reasons is cashed out in terms of the supposed luck-free zone, an external extra is a necessity if the total picture is so much as to look as if it might be a picture of knowledge.

The externalist admixture involves conceding that whether what one has is knowledge is to some extent a matter of luck, outside the control of reason. The concession is supposed to be tolerable because a proper position in the space of reasons is only a necessary condition of

knowledge; so reason can still be credited with full control over whether one's positions in the space of reasons are as they should be.

In fact the upshot makes no sense of how it can be knowledge that someone has in a favourable case. If two believers are on a par in respect of the excellence of their exercises of reason, how can we make sense of the idea that only one of them is a knower, on the basis of the thought that, in a region that we are invited to conceive as outside the reach of his reason, things are as he takes them to be, whereas the other is not so fortunate?[41] Are we really giving any weight to the idea that knowledge has something to do with standings in the space of reasons? Would it not be more honest to embrace the outright externalism which abandons that idea? I doubt that anyone would take the hybrid conception seriously if it did not seem to be the only hope of keeping the space of reasons relevant while making room for knowledge in the problematic areas.

But there is an alternative position which does combine those desiderata. The hybrid conception makes its concession to luck too late; the real trouble is with the thought which it does not question, the thought that reason must be credited with a province within which it has absolute control over the acceptability of positions achievable by its exercise, without laying itself open to risk from an unkind world. That thought, like its obvious analogues in the sphere of practical reason, has all the look of a philosophers' fantasy.[42] If we avoid fantasy, we have no reason not to allow that positions like seeing, or hearing from someone, that things are thus and so are standings in the space of reasons in their own right, even though there is an irreducible element of luck, of kindness from the world, in whether one occupies them.[43]

One reason, then, why the epistemology of testimony is perhaps an especially useful topic for reflection, along with the sort of case which I considered in Section 4 above, is that the propensity of human beings to be erratic and capricious, like the propensity of durable but impermanent states of affairs to lapse, brings out vividly how powers of acquiring and retaining knowledge that common sense has no hesitation in ascribing to us are at the mercy of factors that cannot be made subject to our rational control. That fact has induced epistemologists to suppose that if the space of reasons is relevant to knowledge at all, we have to choose between scepticism and the hybrid conception of knowledge; but in trying to avoid the threat of scepticism, the hybrid conception makes it hard to see how what it depicts as knowledge can

deserve the title. The supposedly forced choice reflects a typically unnoticed assumption about how to place epistemic luck: that it must be excluded from the space of reasons. My aim has been to suggest the liberating potential of discarding that assumption.

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NOTES

[1] My interest in testimony derives from Gareth Evans, as does my conviction that it cannot be accommodated by the sort of account of knowledge which I attack in this paper. I believe I also owe to him my interest in the sorts of case I discuss in §4 below, where knowledge is retained under the risk that what would have been knowledge if the relevant fact had still obtained is not knowledge because the fact no longer obtains. I have benefited from comments by Robert Brandom and Jonathan Dancy.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1969), §141.

[3] 'Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all': Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Sheed and Ward, London, 1975), p. 401. I hope to elaborate this admittedly difficult idea elsewhere.

[4] Much of *On Certainty* is about the status of this sort of knowledge. Wittgenstein himself is dubious about counting it as knowledge; but I think that is inessential to his main point, which is to warn against assimilating the sort of thing in question – propositions which, by not being on the agenda for testing and confirmation, function as pivots on which our practices of looking for grounds for belief can hinge – to cases where it makes sense to look for the grounds of a belief. (Wittgenstein's doubt about counting these propositions as known may reflect the influence of the kind of conception of knowledge that I am going to attack.)

[5] 'In characterizing an episode or a state as that [better: one] of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says': 'Empiricism and the philosophy of mind', in *Science, Perception and Reality* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963), at p. 169. I put in the qualification about rational animals in order to leave room for the concept of knowledge to be extended to non-rational animals also; but nothing in this paper need depend on that.

[6] A principle on these lines was stated by Ernest Sosa in 'The analysis of "knowledge that P"', *Analysis* **xxv** (1964–5), 1–8, at p. 8. It matters that I say 'may become available to' and not 'is acquired by'. For one thing, the opportunity for knowledge may not be there for a hearer even if the speaker is giving expression to his knowledge; see §6 below. For another, one cannot be forced to avail oneself of knowledge that one is in a position to acquire; excessive caution, for instance, may lead one to pass up an opportunity.

[7] See Elizabeth Fricker, 'The epistemology of testimony', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* **lxi** (1987), 57–83, especially at pp. 60–2, for some discussion

of the different possibilities here, especially on what might be meant by requiring the knower to possess the justification. I agree with her that we lose the point of invoking the space of reasons if we allow someone to possess a justification even if it is outside his reflective reach.

[8] This is a point at issue between Fricker, *op. cit.*, and David Cooper's contribution to the same symposium, 'Assertion, phenomenology, and essence', *ibid.* 85–105. I think Fricker is quite right that this knowledge is perceptual. (But that is not to say that it constitutes an absolute starting-point: see §5 below.) Cooper suggests that this phenomenological and epistemological position must miss the insights of Romanticism, but that strikes me as the reverse of the truth. However, the point is not central to my concerns here.

[9] See Fricker, *op. cit.* pp. 72–3.

[10] Willingness to say 'No' may seem to preclude claiming that the tourist knows where the cathedral is. But what is threatened is only one reading of the claim that he knows that he knows where the cathedral is. And it is quite dubious that someone who knows must know that he knows, in the relevant sense. (See David Wiggins, 'On knowing, knowing that one knows, and consciousness', in E. Saarinen, R. Hilpinen, I. Niiniluoto, and M. Provence Hintikka (eds.), *Essays in Honour of Jaakko Hintikka* (D. Reidel, Dordrecht, 1979), pp. 237–48.) There may be another reading of the principle that a knower knows that he knows; I have phrased my sceptical queries so as to leave it open that, if we stop looking for non-question-begging certifications of epistemic standing, we may be able to retrieve a possibility of crediting the tourist with knowledge that his informant is competent and trustworthy, as something on a level with the knowledge he acquires in the transaction, not prior to it in the space of reasons. (Compare the idea that knowledge that one is not dreaming is on a level with the knowledge of the environment that one's senses are yielding one, not something one would need to be able to credit oneself with first, in order to be able to take it that one's senses are indeed yielding one knowledge of the environment. See my 'Singular thought and the extent of inner space', in Philip Pettit and John McDowell (eds.), *Subject, Thought, and Context* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986), pp. 137–68, at pp. 147–8.)

[11] Some such suggestion is implicit in Fricker's argument, *op. cit.* p. 75, against the idea that one can be entitled to a presumption of sincerity and competence in the absence of special evidence to the contrary; she responds 'I would not like to be obliged to form beliefs in response to others' utterances in accordance with this presumption!' But I do not want to defend the idea that Fricker is attacking here, that there is a general presumption of sincerity and competence (as if gullibility were an epistemic right, or even an obligation). In the case I am considering, I think the tourist is entitled to his belief about where the cathedral is, without taking care to rule out the possibility of a practical joke; but I do not think that is because he is exercising a general presumption of sincerity and competence. That is the sort of thing that it is natural to appeal to in a version of the conception I am attacking, one which keeps the idea that mediated standings consist in the cogency of arguments but is less optimistic than Fricker about how cogent the available arguments ares, unless they are beefed up with general presumptions of this sort. I want a more radical departure from the governing conception. This should become clearer in due course.

[12] See Blackburn's 'Knowledge, truth, and reliability', *Proceedings of the British Academy* **lxx** (1984), 167–87; the quoted phrase is from p. 185.

[13] Induction can have a confusing effect here: it can seem to be a counter-example to the principle. But demanding that an argument be conclusive is not the same as demanding that it be deductive. I suggest that philosophers have been insufficiently willing to query the antecedent of the principle at n. 29 (pp. 242–3) of my 'Anti-realism and the epistemology of understanding', in Herman Parret and Jacques Bouveresse (eds.), *Meaning and Understanding* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1981), pp. 225–48.

[14] Perhaps some will be tempted to maintain that even so one does know that the result will be red, protecting that claim from being undermined by the fact that one does not know that the result will not be white on the ground that knowledge is not closed under known implication: for which thesis, see Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981), pp. 206–11. Whatever the merits of the thesis, such an application of it strikes me as desperate.

[15] It is a familiar experience to find, some time after one has, say, missed the newspapers for a week, that things one thought one knew have for some time been no longer true. It is striking that the experience has no tendency to dislodge one's belief that one knows a great deal else in the sort of way in which one thought one knew the thing that one has just been disabused of.

[16] We can take the former knowledge as unproblematic, for the purposes of the example. Perhaps it was derived from broadcast coverage of Churchill's latest birthday. (The point I am making with this example is about retention of knowledge, and is not meant to turn especially on the fact that the knowledge retained was originally acquired by testimony; see below.)

[17] There may be a temptation to say that the same goes for the roulette-wheel case, on the basis that if we disallow it, we disallow all knowledge by induction. But it is simply not true that in the roulette-wheel case one knows that the outcome will be red. If induction is a way of coming to know things, that is not an example of it. (Knowing that the outcome will probably be red is of course quite another matter.)

[18] A case like this one, involving retention of knowledge not originally acquired by testimony, is briefly discussed by David Braine, 'The nature of knowledge', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* **lxxii** (1971–2), 41–63, at p. 42.

[19] Blackburn, *op. cit.*, proposes that one knows when one's informational state, conceived otherwise than as having the fact known in one's cognitive grasp, leaves no real possibility ('chance') that things are not as one takes them to be. (Having the fact known in one's cognitive grasp would leave no chance at all of being wrong, but Blackburn contemptuously dismisses conceptions of knowledge on these lines.) He applies that account of knowledge to the general hypotheses on which sceptical arguments trade (that one is a brain in a vat, and so forth). The upshot is that whether one counts as knowing that such hypotheses do not obtain depends on who has the onus of proof in a dispute with a sceptic. But if my informational state, between intakes of news, with respect to who is President is not allowed to embrace the fact that Bush is still President, it surely leaves a real possibility that Bush is no longer President. Assassinations, or other sudden deaths, of Presidents are 'kinds of things that happen'. So are misleading perceptual appearances (and so on; different kinds of real possibility are relevant to the different sorts of knowledge). So even if Blackburn achieves an onus-swapping standoff with the kind of sceptic who attempts to wield general sceptical hypotheses to undermine whole regions of knowledge all at once, it looks as if his picture will deprive us of pretty much the

same knowledge, only piece by piece. If we deny ourselves a 'guaranteeing' conception of a putative knower's informational state, the less rich informational state we thereby restrict ourselves to will always leave open perfectly real possibilities (not the sceptic's arguably unreal possibilities) that he is wrong. (Blackburn simply misses this point; he concentrates entirely on the general sceptical hypotheses, as if there could be no threat to ordinary knowledge claims except from them.)

[20] Christopher Peacocke discusses retained knowledge in Chapter 10 of *Thoughts: an Essay on Content* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986). He defends a 'Model of Virtual Inference' which represents such knowledge as requiring the knower to have at his disposal a sound abductive argument to the truth of what he is said to know. I think it is significant that Peacocke considers only knowledge of standing states, such as that Hume died in 1776. Perhaps someone who finds himself seeming to remember that fact can have a sound abductive argument from his present informational state, considered as not embracing the information that Hume died in 1776, to the conclusion that this is so. But that does not carry over to retained knowledge of changeable states. From my willingness to vouch for Bush's being President, I cannot get by abduction to his being President now, as opposed to his having been President when I last checked.

[21] In Blackburn's terms, seeing that . . . , remembering that . . . , and so forth are 'guaranteeing' epistemic positions. Blackburn suggests (*op. cit.* pp. 176–8) that if one traffics in the idea of 'guaranteeing' states, in the stamping-grounds of sceptics (knowledge of the external world and so forth), one lapses into bizarre imagery (see his remarks about 'the glassy blob of the mind', p. 177). But the relevant concepts belong to sheer common sense; what would be bizarre is to suggest that we do not achieve such 'guaranteeing' positions as seeing that things are thus and so. See, further, n. 43 below. Blackburn's moves are skewed, I think, by an aspiration (which he tends to read into others) to answer sceptical challenges. I do think the epistemological outlook I am recommending makes sceptical challenges seem less urgent, but obviously not by answering them. (If someone is exploiting a general sceptical hypothesis in order to attack a knowledge claim, he will not be impressed if one attributes to oneself a 'guaranteeing' informational state with respect to the proposition one claims to know; if the sceptical hypothesis holds, the attribution cannot be true.)

[22] What counts as excessive depends on the proposition known. If one missed the British news media for a fairly long period, and when one tuned in again there were no lingering traces of national mourning, it might not be doxastically irresponsible to take it that a greatly loved national figure like Churchill was still alive; it would be different with someone else.

[23] The topic of doxastic responsibility is clearly complex. Note that the standards can depend on what is at stake. Consider again the case of the child at school. If nothing turns on it, we might casually credit her with knowledge of the arrangement of the furniture in the living room of her house. But if we tell the story so that something that matters a great deal to her depends on whether she is right, it may become doxastically irresponsible for her to vouch for the layout's being as she recalls it to be. In such circumstances, it starts to be significant for her epistemic status that her parents may have moved the furniture, and she is in a position to know that that kind of thing does happen.

[24] One does not count as seeing something to be the case, even if the fact that that is

how things look to one results, in the way characteristic of seeing, from the fact that that is how things are, if one's taking it that that is how things are is doxastically irresponsible (one has, say, excellent reasons for mistrusting one's vision).

[25] The idea that perceptual appearances can be absolute starting-points is one form of the Myth of the Given, demolished by Sellars in 'Empiricism and the philosophy of mind', *op. cit.*

[26] The thesis that there are absolute starting-points is a way to formulate epistemological foundationalism. The traditional competitor of foundationalism is coherentism, and that label fits the position I am endorsing here. But we need to get straight how inferences (other than those involving the factiveness of the epistemic concepts) are relevant before we embrace coherentism as an alternative to foundationalism. Otherwise the coherentist alternative is the heroic position, and it is not clear that it yields any real improvement over foundationalism. (See Crispin Wright, 'Facts and certainty', *Proceedings of the British Academy* **lxxi** (1985), 429–72, at p. 469.)

[27] Testimony figured only incidentally, presupposed to be a source of knowledge, in the examples of §4.

[28] Different descriptions of standings are appropriate for different manners of acquisition of knowledge by testimony. One with more general application is 'having learned (from such and such a source) that . . .'. Consider also the expression 'I gather that . . .', which claims knowledge from testimony without identifying the source. (Compare 'I heard it through the grapevine'.)

[29] The respect of likeness is that hearing from someone that things are thus and so, like seeing that things are thus and so, is a 'guaranteeing' informational state. Of course that is compatible with all kinds of differences. In particular, I am not suggesting that in acquiring knowledge by testimony one experiences things to be the way one comes to know they are (an obvious phenomenological falsehood which Fricker, *op. cit.* pp. 74–5, spends some time denying). The crucial notion is that of a 'guaranteeing' informational state whose possession of that feature is not to be understood in terms of how strong a reason for believing the proposition in question is afforded by an underlying non-'guaranteeing' informational state. There is no need to assimilate this to the idea of a direct perceptual or quasi-perceptual mode of access to the state of affairs known. (Cf. Wright, 'Facts and certainty', at pp. 443–4). On the contrary: the epistemic standing constituted by having heard from someone that things are thus and so is clearly mediated by having heard the person say that things are that way; and this mediation (unlike the mediation of seeing that things are thus and so by having it look to one as if things are thus and so) clearly precludes the idea of a direct perceptual access to what one comes to know. What I am objecting to is the prejudice that what this mediation amounts to must be that the non-'guaranteeing' informational state yields the subject something on the lines of a premiss from which he can (with other premisses if necessary) infer the proposition he is said to know, in such a way that his epistemic standing can be made out to consist in the cogency of the argument.

[30] Here it is important that the topic of this paper is the first of the two sorts of knowledge through language which I distinguished in §1, and not the second. The remark in the text would be quite wrong about the second; as Wittgenstein says (*On Certainty*, §143): 'A child learns there are reliable and unreliable informants much later than it learns facts which are told it.'

[31] Peacocke, *op. cit.* pp. 149–50, gives an example. Mary forms beliefs about whether it is raining sometimes by looking and sometimes by deduction from astrological principles. Her friend cannot acquire knowledge that it is raining from her say-so, even on the occasions when what she is giving expression to is knowledge.

[32] Fricker, *op. cit.*, considers the epistemology of testimony in the context of a choice between Justificationism and Reliabilism. Reliabilism as she explains it may not require that someone who acquires knowledge by testimony even has the concept of another person speaking his mind; if there is such a requirement, it is only fortuitous. In effect, Reliabilism in Fricker's contrast abandons the idea that knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons. I agree with her rejection of this position, but I am taking issue with her implicit suggestion that the only way to keep the space of reasons relevant to the epistemology of testimony is by adopting the sort of view that I considered in §2.

[33] It is noteworthy that Peacocke's example, cited in n. 31 above, has Mary talking to her friend (who presumably knows her peculiar ways of coming to believe that it is raining). Peacocke does not consider how, if at all, the case is altered if we consider someone who does not know Mary, hearing her say that it is raining on one of the occasions on which her utterance is an expression of knowledge.

[34] There seems to be a general possibility of such cases; something can be irresponsible for one person and not for another because the first knows something that the second does not know. (Such cases would be counterexamples to something one might mean by saying that knowledge is seamless. But note that they do not threaten the principle suggested by Gareth Evans at p. 331 of *The Varieties of Reference* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982).)

[35] Someone who acquires knowledge by testimony has *some* reason, independently of our crediting him with that knowledge, for believing the proposition in question. That seems guaranteed by his meeting the condition which I have suggested is necessary for doxastic responsibility: that his belief-acquisition be rationally responsive to considerations whose relevance is ensured by an understanding of how the knowledge-acquisition that he takes himself to be engaged in works. Peacocke, *op. cit.* p. 166 writes: 'There is a strong intuition that a belief is not knowledge if it is acquired by testimony for which there is no inductive or abductive argument available to the believer to the truth of the testimony.' Peacocke goes on to suggest that that intuitive requirement is not met in a case he describes, involving an isolated archaeological relic with a single intelligible sentence inscribed on it. I think that is wrong: the requirement is very weak (simply that one must not be totally without reason for belief), and surely in Peacocke's case there is some inductive argument (from what civilizations generally do with inscriptions) for believing what is written on the relic. The important point is that the requirement is far too weak for meeting it to be intelligible as what makes a case constitute one of knowledge. (The point here is close to one that Peacocke makes himself, at p. 167, n. 9, in arguing cogently against the idea that 'Necessarily, most assertions are true' can play a central role in the epistemology of testimony). The intuition is no recommendation for an inferential model of knowledge by testimony, as Peacocke suggests. (I suspect that the presence of such a model in the context distorts Peacocke's sense of whether the intuition is met in his archaeological case: meeting the intuitive requirement is only a necessary condition for knowledge by testimony, but Peacocke responds to the case as though it were sufficient.)

[36] Compare Peacocke's remarks about the need to explain such formulations, *op. cit.* p. 149.

[37] See Robert Brandom, 'Asserting', *Nous* **xvii** (1983), 637–50.

[38] For these labels, see, e.g., Nozick, *op. cit.* pp. 280–3. For the idea of a mixed or hybrid epistemology, see Peacocke, *op. cit.* In Chapter 9 Peacocke sets out an externalist reliability condition for knowledge (see pp. 155, 157); then in Chapter 10 he argues that this must be supplemented with a condition requiring 'internal rationality' (p. 156).

[39] We could complicate this to allow for cases where the subject is blameworthy because his restricted informational states fail to include something they should have included; he should have checked something but did not. That is an analogue to negligence in the field of practical blameworthiness. The complication makes no difference to my point: even if one exercises maximal care at achieving the right restricted informational states, one will still be at the world's mercy in believing what they give one reason to believe.

[40] The point is peculiar to empirical knowledge. If someone takes himself to have proved a conclusion or computed a result when he has not, there must have been a defect in his moves in the space of reasons; it cannot be that the only thing he can blame for what has gone wrong is the world. That is essentially the feature of proof (or computation) that Crispin Wright aims to generalize, in his account of what it is to have verified a statement ('Strict finitism', *Synthese* **li** (1982), 203–82, at pp. 210–18). In a way that is very strange by my lights, Wright combines an understanding of that feature of proof (or computation) with endorsing, even in that case, the retreat to a lesser informational state, the move which I am trying to explain as motivated by the desire to find a region where thought is immune to the world's unkindness. He writes (p. 210): 'If arithmetical computation is to be a paradigm of verification, then to be entitled to claim to have verified a statement cannot be to be entitled to claim a conclusive, *indefeasible* warrant for its assertion; for the most painstaking and careful execution of a computation confers no guarantee that is correct.' That is to retreat (in respect of what warrants one's assertion) from 'I have proved that it is so' (whose truth surely would constitute a conclusive, indefeasible warrant) to 'I have before me what, on painstaking and careful inspection, appears to be a proof that it is so'. But the retreat seems unmotivated, given the fact that if I am misled in such a case, the fault is in my moves in the space of reasons, not in the world. I suppose it is because Wright thinks mathematical proof and empirical verification are on a par in respect of the necessity of that retreat (and so in respect of the defeasibility of available warrants) – in effect, on a par in respect of vulnerability to the Argument from Illusion – that he thinks he can generalize that feature of mathematical verification without risking an undue concession to scepticism. I think the resulting epistemology is disastrous. (These remarks improve on my discussion of Wright's epistemology in 'Mathematical platonism and Dummettian anti-realism', in *Dialectical* (1989), 173–92.)

[41] I press this question in my 'Criteria, defeasibility, and knowledge', *Proceedings of the British Academy* **lxviii** (1982), 455–79.

[42] On the analogous temptations in philosophical thinking about practical rationality, see especially Bernard Williams, 'Moral luck', in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981), pp. 20–39.

[43] This formulation should make it clear how wildly off-target Blackburn is (*op. cit.*, p. 176) in supposing that my appeal to 'guaranteeing' informational states belongs within

the general framework of the attempt 'to ensure that there is no element of luck, or even contingency, in the true believer's title to knowledge'. The traditional effect of the attempt to transcend luck is that the area of known fact is shrunk 'potentially down to an entirely subjective realm'; Blackburn takes me to offer a different option, within the same general framework, according to which, instead of a shrinkage in what can be known, the mind (the seat of these supposed luck-free 'guaranteeing' states) expands to 'embrace' all sorts of worldly states of affairs. No wonder Blackburn finds the idea crazy; it *is* crazy. A 'principle of charity' might have led Blackburn to wonder whether it can have been what I was proposing in the work he is discussing ('Criteria, defeasibility, and knowledge', *op. cit.*). But he is so locked in to the thought that epistemology must centre on a luck-free zone (a role played in his own favoured epistemology by the 'indicative' states to which we are pushed back by a generalized form of the Argument from Illusion, plus what can be inferred from their content) that he cannot comprehend how I can have been questioning that framework conception; so he saddles me with the insane position which is the only interpretation that my words will bear within the framework.

C. A. J. COADY

TESTIMONY, OBSERVATION AND "AUTONOMOUS KNOWLEDGE"

Our dependence upon the word of others can be shown to be extensive and deep. We exhibit such dependence, though seldom acknowledge it explicitly, in our confident knowledge claims and actions in everyday life as well as in our more theoretical pursuits. In everyday life, we automatically relay sporting scores and judicial verdicts, we accept new financial burdens on the basis of reported pay increases, and we plan holidays on the basis of geographical, transport and accommodation information from others. In the sciences, we talk of what is known and has been proved in hosts of instances where we have not done the proving or "done the knowing", and often this is in contexts where we wouldn't have the individual resources for the relevant investigations anyway.

The dependence is, therefore, extensive, but it is also deep. By this use of the term "deep" I mean to reject the appeal of a certain model of our reliance upon testimony which inevitably intrudes itself at the point where the widespread nature of the reliance comes (sometimes reluctantly) to be acknowledged. The model insists that, extensive as the dependence is, it does not go as deep as our indebtedness to the purely individual resources of reasoning, perceiving and remembering that must be the ultimate grounding of our genuine knowledge claims. Hence, the extensive reliance upon testimony must itself, according to the model, be similarly grounded.

The model is, in this sense and perhaps others, an individualistic one, and it is closely related to an ideal of what one philosopher has called "autonomous knowledge".[1] In what follows, I hope to show certain fundamental inadequacies in the model by examining the views of a great philosopher whose discussion of testimony both reflects the power of the model and has been itself influential in ensuring its continued domination of our ways of thinking. The philosopher is David Hume.[2]

Hume is one of the few philosophers who has offered anything like a sustained account of testimony and if any view has a claim to the title of "the received view" it is his. In what follows I shall examine and criticize Hume's position in the hope of damaging the model and of throwing light on other more general issues concerning the

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 225–250.

epistemological status of testimony. Hume's major discussion of the matter occurs in his essay on Miracles which is Sect. 10 of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. There Hume concedes the utility and evidential value of testimony: " . . . there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators."[3]

Essentially his theory constitutes a reduction of testimony as a form of evidence or support to the status of a species (one might almost say, a mutation) of inductive inference. And, again, insofar as inductive inference is reduced by Hume to a species of observation and consequences attendant upon observation, then in a like fashion, testimony meets the same fate. So we find him saying immediately after the sentence quoted above:

> This species of reasoning, perhaps one may deny to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. I shall not dispute about a word. It will be sufficient to observe that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. It being a general maxim, that no objects have any discoverable connexion together, and that all the inferences, which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction; it is evident that we ought not to make an exception to this maxim in favour of human testimony, whose connexion with any event seems, in itself, as little necessary as any other (p. 111).

And elsewhere in the same essay he says:

> The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any *connexion*, which we perceive *a priori*, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them (p. 113).

This is the view that I want to contest and, as it is convenient to have a label, I shall call it the Reductionist Thesis and shall employ the abbreviation *R.T.* to refer to it. J. L. Mackie has argued plausibly that some such reductionism is essential to a concept of "autonomous knowledge" which he sees as involved in traditional empiricism. Mackie is attracted to an *R.T.* program and to the concept of cognitive autonomy he associates with it, but is uncertain of its viability and admits that it is only one ideal of knowledge "latent" in our ordinary concept of knowledge. The "autonomous knower", in Mackie's sense, is someone

who "should know whatever it is off his own bat"[4] and who relies upon testimony only when he has checked for himself the credibility of the witnesses he trusts. Although this ideal exercises a powerful fascination for us, I shall try to show that it is chimerical and the programme it rests upon is, in principle, misguided.

I shall be dealing primarily with the Western philosophical tradition (and within that, principally with the English speaking strand) but there are interesting analogies within Indian philosophical epistemology. In particular, there are thinkers in the Indian tradition who seem to have a view of testimony similar to Hume's, though there are also others who are immune to the reductionist outlook. So, the Vaiśeṣika, the old Mīmāṃsaka and the Prabhākara schools, despite their other divergences, attempt to reduce the status of testimonial knowledge to that of inference from individual perceptions. By contrast, the Nyāya school argues that knowledge by testimony (or "knowledge from words" as it is known) should be seen as *sui generis*. Other contributors to this volume, with more expertise in Indian philosophy than I possess, will discuss these complex and interesting intellectual differences; I merely call attention to them here to suggest that the problem area is in no way a parochial one.[5]

My criticism of the reductionist approach begins by calling attention to a fatal ambiguity in the use of terms like "experience" and "observation" in the Humean statement of *R.T.* We are told by Hume that we only trust in testimony because experience has shown it to be reliable but where experience means individual observation and the expectations it gives rise to, this seems plainly false and, on the other hand, where it means common experience (i.e., the reliance upon the observations of others) it is surely question-begging. To take the second part of the ambiguity first – let us call it *R.T.*^{2} – we find Hume speaking of "*our* experience of their constant and regular conjunction". And it is clear enough that Hume often means to refer by such phrases to the common experience of mankind and not to the mere solitary observations of David Hume. Our reliance upon testimony as an institution, so to speak, is supposed to be based on the same kind of footing as our reliance upon laws of nature (Hume thinks of this as an important premiss in his critique of miracles) and he speaks of the "firm and unalterable experience" which has established these laws. It is an important part of his argument that a miracle must be a violation of the laws of nature and so he says:

It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has *never* been observed in any age or country. There must therefore be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation (p. 115).

We may ignore, for our purposes here, the validity of this highly debatable account of a law of nature and the blatant question-begging of his "*never* been observed in any age or country" and yet gather from this extract the need Hume has to mean by "experience", "observation", and the like, the common experience of mankind. Clearly his argument does not turn on the fact, for instance, that *he* has "frequently observed" the sudden death of a man "seemingly in good health" – it is quite likely that Hume (like most of us) never had occasion to observe personally anything of the kind. And the point is surely clinched by his reference to "uniform experience" and his use of the phrase "observed in any age or country".

Evidently then, *R.T.*, as actually argued by Hume, is involved in vicious circularity since the experience upon which our reliance upon testimony as a form of evidence is supposed to rest is itself reliant upon testimony which cannot itself be reduced in the same way. The idea of taking seriously someone else's observations, someone else's experience, already requires us to take their testimony (i.e., reports of what they observe) equally seriously. It is ludicrous to talk of their observations being the major part of our justification in taking their reports seriously when we have to take their reports seriously in order to know what their observations are.

Hume's conflation of personal and communal observation can be further illustrated by a passage from the *Treatise of Human Nature* (Bk. I, Pt. IV, Sect. II). Discussing our reasons for believing in the continued, independent existence of material things, he says

I receive a letter, which, upon opening it, I perceive by the handwriting and subscription to have come from a friend, who says he is two hundred leagues distant. It is evident I can never account for this phenomenon, conformable to my experience in other instances, without spreading out in my mind the whole sea and continent between us, and supposing the effects and continued existence of posts and ferries, according to my memory and observation (p. 196).

Here we have Hume using "my" observation when he is clearly not entitled to do so since there is probably no single person who has

personally observed the complete path of even *one* letter from the moment it leaves the sender's hand to the moment it reaches its destination. Hume might have observed postmen, posts, ferries, etc., but his belief about what they do (his belief in the postal system) is dependent upon a complicated web of testimony and inference, prominent amongst which would no doubt be what he was told by his teachers or parents. And yet, "my memory and observation". How easy it is to appropriate at a very fundamental level what is known by report and what is known by personal observation. Similarly, that babies are born of women in a certain way is known to all of us and it is a fact of observation but many of us have not observed even one birth for ourselves.

J. L. Mackie, who, as we saw earlier, is attracted to the reductive enterprise, realises that any *R.T.* project must eschew covert reliance upon the observations of others. Mackie acknowledges that "the greater part of what each one of us knows comes to him by testimony"[6] but thinks that the success of a project like Hume's is essential to the viability of a certain concept of "autonomous knowledge". He is clear, however, that what I have called the $R.T.^2$ form of it will not do and he proposes instead a version of the first part of what I have called the *R.T.* ambiguity – let us call it $R.T.^1$. Here is Mackie's version of the problem

> Knowledge that one acquires through testimony, that is, by being told by other people, by reading, and so on, can indeed be brought under the heading of this authoritative knowledge, but only if the knower somehow checks, for himself, the credibility of the witnesses. And since, if it is a fact that a certain witness is credible, it is an external fact, checking this in turn will need to be based on observations that the knower makes himself – or else on further testimony, but, if an infinite regress is to be avoided, we must come back at some stage to what the knower observes for himself.[7]

Mackie is surely right to think that only some such version can avoid the criticism we have made of $R.T.^2$ so let us, on Hume's behalf, retract his incautious commitment to common experience and state the *R.T.* in terms of personal observations alone. My claim was that so stated $R.T.^1$ is plainly false but this has yet to be shown. A Humean version of $R.T.^1$ would run something like this:

> We rely upon testimony as a species of evidence *because* each of us observes for himself a constant and regular conjunction between what people report and the way the world is. More particularly, we each observe for ourselves a constant conjunction between kinds of report and kinds of situation so that we have good inductive grounds for expecting this conjunction to continue in the future.

My justification for bringing in the idea of a kind or report correlating with a kind of situation (which is not, for instance, explicit in Mackie's version) is Hume itself:

> And as the evidence, derived from witnesses and human testimony, is founded on past experience, so it varies with the experience, and is regarded either as a *proof* or a *probability* according to the conjunction between any particular kind of report and any kind of object has been found to be constant or variable (p. 112).

Now I characterized this sort of position as "plainly false" because it seems absurd to suggest that, individually, we have done anything like the amount of fieldwork that *R.T.*^{1} requires. As mentioned earlier, many of us have never seen a baby born nor have we examined the circulation of the blood nor the actual geography of the world nor any fair sample of the laws of the land nor have we made the observations that lie behind our knowledge that the lights in the sky are heavenly bodies immensely distant nor a vast number of other observations that *R.T.*^{1} would seem to require. Some people have of course made them *for us* but we are precluded from taking any solace from this fact under the present interpretation of *R.T.* So it was this general situation that made me speak of *R.T.*^{1} as plainly false.

But the matter is perhaps more complex than such a characterization would indicate as can be seen by considering a possible rejoinder by the defenders of *R.T.*^{1}. This rejoinder might run as follows: You are ignoring the very important provision, made by Hume, and already noticed by you, that the conjunction in individual experience is between kinds of report and kinds of object. This cuts down the amount of observing that has to be done and makes the project a manageable one for an individual. I think I may reasonably plead "not guilty" to this accusation inasmuch as I intended the list above (of conjunctions never checked personally by most of us) to be more than a recital of particular conjunctions that *R.T.*^{1} requires us to have personally checked. The list was supposed to be typical in the sense that it indicated *areas* in which we rightly accept testimony without ever having engaged in the sort of checking of reports against personal observation that *R.T.*^{1} demands.

But quite apart from this, there seem to me to be serious difficulties in the very idea of finding constant conjunctions between (in Hume's words) "any particular kind of report and any kind of object". Hume wants these conjunctions to be something like the kinds of conjunc-

tions he thinks are required to establish causal laws and even laws of nature. In such matters the decisive constant conjunctions are between one kind of object and another kind of object. But whatever we think about the idea of a kind of object, the notion of a kind of report surely requires some explanation in this context. Unfortunately Hume does nothing to provide such an explanation and since the matter is also of interest in its own right I shall risk a digression to consider some possible interpretations and their implications before turning to a different, and perhaps more decisive, difficulty for the type of approach represented by *R.T.*^{1}.

It seems to me that "kind of report" may be meant to refer either to the kind of speaker who gives the report or to the kind of content the report contains. If it is the former that is intended (and some of Hume's remarks *seem* to indicate this) then presumably the kind of speaker will not be determined by such considerations as colour of skin or nationality or hair-style or height, rather, the relevant kind will have something to do with authority or expertise or credentials to say. So the *R.T.*^{1} would go something like: we rely upon testimony because we have each personally observed a correlation between expert (or authoritative) reports and the kinds of situations reported in a large number of cases.

But the major difficulty for this interpretation is that a man's being an expert or an authority on some matter cannot be a matter of mere inspection in the way that his being white or tall is. That some man is an expert on, say, geography or South East Asian politics, is either known on the testimony of others (by far the most usual case) or it has to be established by observing some high correlation between his reports and the relevant situations in the world. If the former then we are no further advanced upon the *R.T.* program of justification since the same problem of establishing expertise must arise again and again. But if the latter, then the notion of an authority or an expert no longer provides us with any specification of *a kind of report*. That is to say, we cannot use the idea of *a kind of report* as equivalent to *report of a kind of speaker* and then proceed to validate testimony along the lines of *R.T.*^{1} because the kind of correlation situation *the existence of which we would supposedly be investigating* would have to be known by us to exist already before we could set up the terms of the investigation.[8]

This indicates that the business of establishing constant conjunctions between kinds of report and kinds of situation must begin with the

interpretation of "kinds of report" as "reports of kinds of situation". And certainly this seems to be a natural way of interpreting Hume's intentions at this point. An initial problem for this interpretation concerns the degree of generality that should attach to the content of a report before it qualifies as a kind of report. That is to say, some sort of decision would presumably be required as to whether or not the report "There is a sick lion in Taronga Park Zoo" belonged to the kind medical report or geographical report or empirical report or existence report. Perhaps it could be said to belong to all of them or to some and not to others but whatever was said it would be of considerable importance to the establishing of conjunctions, since a decision here is a decision about the actual identity of the conjunctions and hence, in consequence, about the degree of correlation likely to be established. For instance, if the report were treated as belonging to the kind "existence report" then it might be that Jones had personally established quite a large number of conjunctions between existence reports and the relevant existence situations without this being any real reason for accepting the report in question. (Compare with: "There is a Martian in my study" which is presumably well supported by Jones's personal experience of existence reports.) On the other hand, if it were treated as a medical report then Jones may have had very little personal experience of correlations between medical reports and medical facts yet this would hardly be a real reason for not accepting the report. In addition, Jones would, on Hume's hypothesis, now have a strong reason for accepting the report if he classifies it one way and no reason for accepting it if he classifies it another way. Since either classification is logically permissible, then it seems to be purely a matter of whim whether Jones has or has not good reason for accepting the report. Clearly some sort of non-arbitrary restriction on the scope of "report of a kind of situation" is required to make this notion of any real value in the elaboration of $R.T.^1$. Here, however, I shall pursue no further the interpretation of "kind of report" and the difficulties involved in specifying clearly the sort of correlations required by $R.T.^1$ because, on the perhaps dubious assumption that the difficulties are soluble, I want to raise what seems to me to be a more fundamental problem.

This difficulty consists in the fact that the whole enterprise of $R.T.^1$ in its present form requires that we understand what testimony is independently of knowing that it is, in any degree, a reliable form of evidence about the way the world is. This is, of course, the point of Hume's saying:

The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any *connexion*, which we perceive *a priori*, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them (p. 113).

It is a clear implication from this that we might have discovered (though in fact we did not) that there was no conformity at all between testimony and reality. Hume's position requires the possibility that we clearly isolate the reports that people make about the world for comparison by personal observation with the actual state of the world and find a high, low, or no correlation between them. But it is by no means clear that we can understand this suggestion. To take the most extreme discovery: imagine a world in which an extensive survey yields no correlation between reports and (individually observed) facts. In such a colossally topsy-turvy world what evidence would there possibly be for the existence of reports at all? Imagine a community of Martians who are in the mess that *R.T.*[1] allows as a possibility. Let us suppose for the moment that they have a language which we can translate (there are difficulties in this supposition as we shall see shortly) with names for distinguishable things in their environment and suitable predicative equipment. We find however, to our astonishment, that whenever they construct sentences addressed to each other in the absence (from their vicinity) of the things designated by the names, but when they are, as we should think, in a position to *report*, then they seem to say what we (more synoptically placed) can observe to be false. But in such a situation what reason would there be for believing that they even had the practice of reporting?

Let us first of all concentrate upon the *speech act* of reporting as it would be natural for an observer to do and ignore for the moment documentary, oblique, institutional testimony and the like. We must suppose that Martians constantly misinform each other about issues in dispute or unresolved issues of interest and never correct each other's misinformation on the basis of their own observations (since that would involve giving correct testimony in the correction situation). They always, for instance, tell each other the wrong time and date, give their names and addresses wrongly, say falsely what the weather is like outdoors, and give false information about where they have been and what they have been doing. On the supposition that they are reporting we cannot have the audience indifferent to the import of this misinformation; we must ask how they act upon it and how they react when their actions go astray in the fact of recalcitrant reality, we must ask about their responses

upon observing the misreported situations for themselves and we must question how it is that they then continue to misreport them. One thing they can't do, as we have noted, is report back, indignantly or sorrowfully, that the original testifier is wrong; nor is it coherent with the attribution of any remotely plausible psychological life to the Martians to suppose that they rely upon these "reports" for the conduct of their intellectual or practical affairs. We are, of course, envisaging a situation which is the stable plight of the community extending over a reasonable length of time; it may be that one could establish a no-correlation result for a very short period in which very few reports, all of them false, were actually made. Obviously, Hume's project is aimed at establishing something general about a more permanent phenomenon. Hence we must suppose that the Martians come to find many "reports" in conflict with their own experience. They also find themselves constrained to falsify their own observations when communicating with others.

It is true that there is a great deal that they cannot or will not directly check upon and even quite a few reports whose falsity may have no practical consequences for the recipient, but it is also true that there is unlikely to be a firm consensus of falsehood about that corpus of unchecked misinformation. Suppose *A* hears a sound and asks *B*, who has just entered from the back yard, whether there is an animal in the yard. *B* knows from his observation that there is (or, strictly, was until very recently) no animal in the yard but says falsely "There is a dog in the yard". He might equally have given false report by saying, "There is a cat in the yard" or "There is a frog in the yard" or. . . . So the fact that ten people will all falsely report some situation or occurrence does not guarantee or even make it likely that they all say even roughly the same thing, indeed they may all contradict each other and still say what is incompatible with a true report. On the assumption that they are not in collusion it will be unlikely that "cohesive falsehood", as we might call it, will often emerge; it will naturally arise only when, in the face of some fact *p*, not-*p*, i.e., the flat denial of *p* by use of negation, is the natural way to misreport it rather than some proposition *q*, *r*, *s* or . . . which is incompatible with it. Consequently, the lack of cohesion in the various reports any individual gets to matters he has not himself observed gives him another reason not to rely upon these reports.

In summary, any Martian has four powerful reasons for not relying upon what others appear to be telling him: (i) he finds their "reports" false whenever he checks personally on them, (ii) he finds reliance

upon them consistently leads him astray in practice, (iii) he finds himself utterly unreliable in what he tells others and it is, at least, possible that he is not a-typical, (iv) others often give chaotically divergent reports on those matters beyond his checking. It is therefore very hard to imagine the activity of reporting in anything like its usual setting with the Martians for there would surely be no reliance upon the "reportive" utterances of others. This conclusion emerges only from the consideration of the speech act of reporting but is strongly reinforced by reflection on the consequences of the no-correlation outcome of documentary and institutional testimony, e.g., roadsigns, maps etc. With no reliance (or only confused and intermittent reliance at best) on the utterances of others the Martian community cannot reasonably be held to have the practice of reporting, even the concept of fantasy would give us only a marginal and elusive grasp of what they are about. Martian "reporting", we might think, is like a generalisation of the fantasy games children play ("Mummy, there's a burglar in the house") which are not taken seriously by adults. These games are, however, parasitic upon fully-fledged reporting which adults do generally rely upon and which give the fantasy a kind of point. In the case of the Martians, the generalisation is so wide that the fantasy appears to have no point at all. In some respects the supposition that reports could exist in this sort of context is like the supposition that orders might never be obeyed. If there were Martians who uttered certain sounds in a tone of voice like the tone we used in ordering we might initially conjecture that they were issuing orders in making these sounds but this conjecture would be undermined if it were found that these sounds never had any effect that might be described as obedience upon any audience.

Alarming as these conclusions are for the Humean project, they arise from assumptions which are already too concessive. The situation with the Martians is even worse than the above discussion reveals since they are in trouble even about the content of the utterances that are alleged to be non-correlated reports. The question of the meaning or content of what they say in their alleged reports is of great importance because the task of looking for a correlation or conjunction of the Humean type is dependent upon knowing what state of affairs is supposed to correlate with the utterance. The principle of correlation has to be given by the meaning of the utterances because, after all, *any* utterance is correlated with or conjoined to *any* situation according to *some* principle of matching. So, even if we allow, for the sake of argument, that we can

understand what it is for the Martians to engage in reporting, we cannot accept the coherence of the no-correlation story unless we can understand what Martian reports actually say. But it is precisely here that serious difficulties arise and to see how they arise we must look more closely at the supposed Martian situation.

It is clear that a very high proportion of the statements made by a community over a sample period will have to be testimony statements. These utterances will contrast with such speech episodes as soliloquies, musings, and conjectures. In the Martian community a common vocabulary is employed across different speech acts so that, as with us, the same form of words may be used for either conjecture or testimony (e.g., "He pushed her in") although there may also be speech-act indicators available of an Austinian or Searlean form ("I testify that . . . ", "I conjecture that . . ."). Suppose then that we encounter a Martian who uses the utterance "Kar do gnos u grin" in the presence of a tree in a garden. Perhaps he waves a languid hand at the tree as he does so. We speculate that this utterance means, can be translated as, "There is a tree in the garden" and, in particular, that "gnos" means "tree".[9] We then find, however, that the Martian frequently uses "gnos" in remarks in situations not involving the presence of a tree in his observational vicinity. Some few of these remarks we assess as mere conjectures (and I shall ignore the problems raised by the question of how this assessment is made) but the majority we decide to be testimony. So we find the Martian saying things of the form: "Kar do gnos u grin", "Kar do gnos u bilt", "Kar do gnos u tonk" and we guess that these mean "There is a tree in the garden", "There is a tree in the study", "There is a tree in the field", or whatever. But then we find that there never is a tree in the garden or in the study or in the field and that in fact this Martian never uses "gnos" to make a true statement when he is talking (non-conjecturely) to others about, as it seems, absent trees. Furthermore, whenever we are able to check upon the truth of Martian utterances, we find that no Martian ever uses "gnos" to make at first hand a true report about absent trees though engaged, as we suppose, in constant attempts to do so or to appear to do so. Just as surprisingly, we find that no Martian ever contradicts or corrects another about absent trees on the basis of his own observation or the "testimony" of others since, by hypothesis, no testimony ever matches the facts. When one Martian, having heard another report (as we interpret it) that there is a tree in the yard, looks for himself into the yard and sees none, he never corrects

or criticises the first report no matter how great the importance of the truth about the matter. Indeed if called upon to say anything germane he repeats the falsehood. If we preserve the hypothesis that we have identified the speech acts of reporting correctly (and we can see more how this would naturally be threatened by the lack of connection between the putative reports and other significant behaviour) then we would have to reject our interpretation of "gnos" as "tree" or make some equally dramatic semantic adjustment. We would have to conclude that "gnos" did not mean "tree" or that it did not mean it unambiguously or possibly that the Martians have a device for negation which we have not yet uncovered (so that "Kar do gnos u grin" really means "There isn't a tree in the garden") or perhaps that the Martians are totally incomprehensible to us. Indeed this last conclusion would be considerably fortified by the fact that the linguistic chaos described above is generated on behalf of not just one sound "gnos" that the Martians utter but by every sound which is supposed to be a word and upon the reference of which the truth or falsity of an alleged report could turn!

It might be complained at this point that I have not described the Martian community in sufficient detail and I readily concede that my account of their circumstances is somewhat sketchy. Attempts to describe the Martian community in any more detail, however, are unlikely to improve the prospects for the Humean enterprise. Possibly one could fill out the particulars in such a way as to make marginally more plausible one or another explanation (massive mistake, massive deceit) for their non-veridical testimony, but it is clear that either pattern of explanation runs into insuperable difficulties. These difficulties are primarily difficulties for the rational acceptability of any proposed interpretation of the meaning of their utterances which has all their reports coming out false, but the problem should not be thought of as restricted to the linguistic realm. Holding fixed such interpretations as "'gnos' means tree" also makes it that much harder reasonably to treat the Martians as perceiving, remembering and reasoning. This is because there are subtle but nonetheless fundamental links between any thinker's perceptual, memory, inferential and testimonial resources. The linguistic disarray produced by the no-correlation hypothesis generates puzzling questions for the interpreter about how the Martians perceive their environment, remember it and reason about the perceptions, memories and inferences of their fellows. True, we can have evidence that the Martians perceive, remember and reason about their environment from

the way they behave towards it – avoid obstacles, act on their surroundings and satisfy desires – but all of this is jeopardised by their apparent incapacity to transmit true information and to correct one another's (apparent) mistakes. (This incapacity is quite different from and more damaging than that possessed by creatures lacking a language altogether.) What do they think of their fellow Martians' cognitive capacities, for instance, given that they must know that the fellow Martians are from time to time in a position to observe or infer the falsity of their testimony but never contradict the false reports. Instead, if anything, they confirm them, even in circumstances where deception has no point.

The transmission of information through a chain of witnesses should also be considered in this connection since it too must also preserve the no-correlation result. This is particularly puzzling from the point of view of any mechanism that might explain the no-correlation. Consider the situation: *A*'s first hand report that *p* will be false to the reported situation (not-*p*) but then *B* transmits the message to *C* who transmits to *D*, and *D* gives it on to *E*. To preserve no-correlation each transmitter must correctly transmit the (false) message but this is hard to understand in a situation in which no first-hand reporter ever testifies truly. If we suppose, for instance, that no-correlation results from the desire to deceive then it is impossible to explain how this desire allows such effective transmission of the original message. It is hardly to be supposed that hearers always know that their original sources are lying and that linking testifiers are always accurate. Amongst other difficulties is the problem that this would require that they always distinguish correctly who is an original and who an intermediate witness. Moreover such witnesses as *B*, *C*, *D* and *E* will report that *p*, as transmitters of the message, but if asked what their informant told them must report (falsely) that he said not *p*. If the mechanism at work is deception then when asked if they believe what their informant said they will have to reply (if they reply at all), "Yes", but if asked whether they believe that *p* they will have to say "Yes" again. It is not clear that any sense can be made of this. On the other hand if the mechanism is one of mistake rather than deception then we will have to suppose either that the misreporting mechanism only works for original witnesses or that it works for all but the mistakes keep cancelling out in the transmission process. The former suggestion is absurdly *ad hoc* especially since the way intermediate witnesses gather the message they transmit is by the same sort

of processes (seeing or hearing) as the original witness. The latter suggestion is equally absurd since it requires, for instance, that whenever *B* hears *A* say "*p*" he mishears this as "not-*p*" and then misstates "not-*p*" as "*p*", and yet for an original witness such as *A* only the one mistake can occur (either the misperception or the misstatement). These possibilities are more than fantastic, they strain beyond breaking point any possibility of natural explanation and disqualify themselves as background hypotheses available for the interpretation of Martian utterances.

I will not pursue these issues of detail further now; I am content if enough has been said of the Martians' plight to raise grave doubts about the task of identifying the contents of Martian-type reports and hence of investigating Humean correlations in such a world. The general point here is that although making true reports with words is not the same thing as using the words correctly, nonetheless the ability to make true reports with words *is* connected with using the words correctly and this ability is something that can only be exhibited (even to the persons themselves) in the making of true reports.

There is a further point to be made about the connection of testimony with meaning. If we take it that teaching someone the meaning of words involves the giving of reports and testimony then the present form of *R.T.*[1] is in even hotter water than before since the suggestion that no reports in fact conform to reality involves the claim that our imagined Martians never report to the Martian children the actual use of their words.

Here the idea that the Martians have a public language seems to get no grip at all. It may be objected that parents and others do not give testimony when they offer instruction in the language and certainly some of the deliberate inculcation of language skills to the immature will consist in training, coaxing or drilling rather than reporting. In the very early stages of the child's progress the teacher simply makes sure that the child can produce certain sounds in the presence of relevantly highlighted objects. The doll is waved about conspicuously and the child is encouraged to repeat the sound "doll" and so on. I doubt that such performances are as mechanical and as far removed from reporting as the objection required and as words such as "drilling" suggest. They are designed, after all, to appeal to the child's, admittedly immature, cognitive equipment to elicit responses which are, to some degree, under the control of awareness and intelligence. Many theorists go so far as

to talk of the child's making inferences and constructing theories. I think that there are difficulties in following such a path, especially that of theory construction, but the child *is* being called upon to recognise intentions or purposes in its instructor's behaviour and to grasp the connections the instructor intends to set before it. It is thus plausible to see such performances as a forerunner of testimony, a kind of proto-reporting, on the ground that the child is expected to gather from the adult cavortings that the adult intends the child to come to think that "doll" is the word for this sort of object, and this thought would have been the content of a straight-forward report but for the fact that the child is not yet in a position to grasp it in such a form. Some support for this construal comes from the fact that such instruction is naturally supplanted by what seem to be reports, namely, reports on the meanings of words ('"Cat" means one of these' or '"Cat" is the word for a four-legged mammal with . . . ') when the child has a little more grip on the language's resources. This suggests strongly that there is an intimate relation between the performing of such instruction and the giving of report; the instruction is, at least in part, a surrogate for reporting, a sort of proto-reporting. It may have more than this role but it has at least this role. Consequently we can hardly find it plausible that the Martian community's reports utterly fail to correlate with reality but their linguistic instructional performances match pretty reliably. Not only would this pose a problem, as it were, of mechanism since it would be hard to see how that which makes for the massive break-down in reporting does not equally produce break-down in the adjacent area of proto-reporting, but also, on Humean grounds, there is as little reason to deny a non-correlation story in the one case as in the other.

It might be argued that our only ground for treating the instructional routines as surrogate reports is their relation to such supposed reports as '"Chair" means one of those' or even the instructional use of 'This is a chair' and the supposition is simply wrong since such utterances are not reports. But why not? Once we have overcome whatever prejudice might exist against expert reports there can be no reason to resist the idea that there can be reports on the meaning of words and other expressions of a natural language and on the grammar of that langauge. All mature speakers of such a language have the relevant expertise to a reasonable degree though, of course, some are more expert than others. If as it is plausible, though perhaps not compelling, to suppose, meaning facts and other linguistic facts are constituted by conventions then this

is no barrier to their being testified to. Amongst the things we often want to know when visiting a foreign country are details of its various conventions (eating, greeting, sporting and so on) and there can surely be no denying that suitably placed people can report on such matters for us. It is not exactly clear what Hume thought constituted public meanings but there is no reason at all to suspect that he wouldn't have allowed them to be matters of report. Probably, he would have accounted them matters of empirical fact open to both observation and report, such as that certain expressions are used in such and such ways in a certain community.

A more serious objection is that this stress upon the teaching of language by report and proto-report distorts the reality of langauge acquisition. Though these processes have some role to play in learning one's first langauge they are overshadowed by processes in which the child learns by observing the communicative activities going on around him or her. There is an area of empirical research here which is still in an early stage of development and which it would be foolish to pre-empt but it is worth remarking that whatever the child acquires by way of such observation is subject to the same constraints that we non-Martians are under in striving to understand the Martian conversations. The child is in no position therefore to acquire the language on a no-correlation supposition. Furthermore, even if we imagine that a natural language could be acquired with *no* explicit teaching, in the sense that the child simply comes to his own conclusions about the meanings and other grammatical properties of the common language, we cannot suppose that he is beyond the need of correction from those versed in the language. The problem which we have dramatised for the teaching situation arises just as dramatically in the correction situation. A community cannot operate a common language without the resources for correcting the inevitable divergences from correct use, and the child's "hypotheses" about the meaning and structure of the language are profoundly dependent upon the correctional testimony of the mature speakers. This point is worth remembering when it is claimed, as it sometimes is, that it is "a merely contingent fact" that languages are acquired by teaching since the point about correction applies equally to "hypotheses" the child is born with.

Let us summarize our progress to date. From Hume's account of testimony I extracted a reductionist thesis which had two forms. I argued that the second form, *R.T.*^{2}, which justified testimony in terms of common

experience was circular and that the first form, *R.T.*[1], which justified testimony in terms of individual observation was simply false since our reliance upon testimony rightly goes beyond anything that could be justified by personal observations. I then considered the rejoinder that *R.T.*[1] might be more plausible if great weight were put upon the observation of constant conjunction between kinds of report and kinds of object and I argued that much was unclear about what was to count as a kind of report, and hence what was to count as a correlation, for the purposes of *R.T.*[1]. In any case *R.T.*[1] surely requires that any such investigation into conjunctions of reports with states of affairs might conclude that there were no such correlations between the two. The supposition that such a situation obtained was pursued for the purpose of *reductio ad absurdum* and I argued that in such a situation, (a) there could be no such things as reports, (b) even if there were reports, there could be no way of establishing Humean correlations or non-correlations since there could be no way of determining the contents of the alleged reports in order to correlate them, and (c) the idea of a public langauge seems undermined.

At this point, certain general objections to my line of argument need to be faced. It might be objected, first of all, that although I have shown that no interpreter could have acceptable evidence that the no-correlation result obtained nonetheless this does not show that the no-correlation result is impossible or unintelligible. The objector might accuse me of showing indifference in what has gone on above, to the distinction between, on the one hand, the impossibility of an interpreter's having reason to construe the Martians as reporting at all or, if reporting, as invariably reporting wrongly and, on the other hand, the impossibility of the Martians actually doing either of these things. Clearly the former impossibility is weaker than the latter. It might further be suggested that my failure to distinguish here shows a regrettable attachment to some form of verifiability theory of meaning which certainly collapses any distinction between a factual proposition's verifiability and its intelligibility or possible truth.

I have little sympathy with logical positivism or with any strong versions of verifiability theories of meaning though it may be that once we move away from the hard-line positivist position which has cognitive meaning depending upon the possibility of individual sensory verification then there is at least some plausibility in what have come to be called anti-realist theories of meaning. Such theories have their own

unclarities but generally hold that we cannot understand what it would be for a proposition to be true or false unless we have some grasp upon what it would be to find it true or false. A parallel point could be made about satisfaction conditions and the like in the case of non-propositional speech acts. This aside, however, one reply should be made at once to the objection, namely, that my criticism of Hume is unaffected by it, in that my criticism need rely on only the weaker of the claims distinguished in the objection. I argued that Hume's *R.T.* project requires us to be able *to detect* a no-correlation situation and this, I have tried to show, cannot be done. Nonetheless, Hume's project also requires that such a situation be possible and it would be interesting to know if my argument rules this out. I suspect that it does and I think this can be shown without entering into the debate about the merits of anti-realism as a general theory of meaning.

If we look at the arguments I have used against the no-correlation possibility it is true that they are often presented in terms of an outside interpreter seeking to make sense of a community's utterances but this is partly a device for making vivid what I have called the "plight" of the Martians themselves. In asking what "we" can make of Martian utterances I am asking what semantic properties they have or can have. To ask what interpretations are possible of utterances is to ask what constitutes those utterances as having certain semantic properties. The possibilities of communication and interpretation are not extrinsic to the existence in public languages of semantic properties like meaning, content and even truth so when we explore such possibilities and come up against their limits we may legitimately see ourselves as showing the limits of application in reality of those properties. My discussion of the plight of the Martians was not only designed to show that an outside interpreter could have no reason to assign meanings that led to the no-correlation result but that the Martians themselves were in the same position with respect to their own and others' utterances in Martian. There may be natural properties of which it can be shown both that there are contexts in which no-one could have reason to believe that they are instantiated and that they nonetheless could be instantiated in those contexts but, for the reasons given, I seriously doubt that the semantic properties of public languages are such.[10]

This might be admitted but another line of objection developed as follows: your case rests on there being every reason to reject interpretations of the Martian's linguistic and other behaviour which lead to

the no-correlation result and it is certainly true that behaviour alone could never justify the meaning and speech act attributions required by the no-correlation supposition, but perhaps we could have other reasons for the attributions. In particular, it has been suggested to me that neural evidence might, in principle, become available that would enable us to fix the meanings of Martian utterances in a way that made all their actual reports or even all their utterances come out false. If we suppose for instance that meanings were fixed by or supervened upon the totality of certain sorts of dispositions to linguistic behaviour then might we not, at least in theory, reach beyond the actual linguistic behaviour to the dispositions via neural evidence.

The basic objection to this proposal is not that it is far-fetched (which, of course, it is in the extreme) but that it is quite unclear what neural evidence could turn the required trick. It may be that certain brain states, are, or are the bases of, the dispositions to linguistic behaviour that determine correct interpretations of Martian language but which brain states or events these are is not to be determined solely by neurological investigation. The identification of the relevant neural states rather waits upon an appropriate interpretation of actual utterances and other behaviour. Given that we could have no grounds in Martian behaviour for speech interpretations that yield a no-correlation story then there is equally no ground for identifying appropriate meaning-related brain states that would yield that conclusion. Nor could we remedy this situation by extrapolating from any discoveries we might come to make in our own community about the neural bases of our own linguistic dispositions and behaviour since the bridging claim that they must have the same types of brain states for the same dispositions (what philosophers call a type-type identity claim) is not logically necessary and is indeed empirically defeated by the evidence of their behaviour.

Even were the suggestion not basically flawed in this way, there is of course some difficulty in seeing how the Humean enterprise of justifying testimony (or any enterprise with a similar inspiration) could be saved by the existence of a possibility detectable only by such a method. The objection to Hume, after all, is that his method of checking correlations requires that it be possible for that method to yield a no-correlation result. The relevance to this of the fact that some other method, not actually available to Hume or to anyone else, might yield such a result is at least a little obscure.

We should perhaps recall here the point made earlier in our discus-

sion of whether the Martians could even be construed as reporting, namely, that the denial of the no-correlation possibility does not mean that no segment of reporting could be false. One might, that is, encounter early in one's investigations a chunk of utterances every one of which turned out to be a false report, but it is only against the background of a subsequently discovered even greater or more significant corpus of correct reports that this possibility could make sense to an investigator.

Am I then saying, in opposition to Hume, that there *is* an *a priori* connection between testimony and reality? An answer to this question would have to rely on a comprehensive theory of knowledge which could determine the conditions under which an *a priori* connection holds between some *x* and reality and hence not only whether there is such a connection between testimony and reality but also whether such a connection holds, say, between perception and reality. I cannot provide such a theory here but I do not understand the idea that testimony could exist in a community and yet it be possible to discover empirically that it had no "connection with reality". Hence, I suspect that the problem of justifying testimony, conceived in anything like Hume's reductive terms, is a pseudo-problem and that the evidence of testimony constitutes a fundamental category of evidence which is not reducible to, or wholly justifiable in terms of, such other basic categories as observation or deductive inference. This opinion I have not proved, but if my argument so far is correct then there is no sense to the idea of justifying testimony by the path of individual observation, at least where this involves anything like a search for Humean correlations.[11] Testimony constitutes a serious stumbling block for the "autonomous knower" of whom Mackie speaks since there must be at least the minimum connection between testimony and reality that the break-down of the no-correlation possibility reveals. From what our discussion of that break-down exhibited we may well conclude that the connection has to be quite extensive. If, as I claimed earlier, the ability to use language meaningfully is connected with the making of true reports then it is surely the *consistent* making of true reports that matters. Nonetheless I shall discuss this stronger conclusion no further here.

Now, of course, none of this means that there is no such thing as mistaken or lying testimony and it is, I think, the fact that there are conditions and circumstances under which we disregard the reports of witnesses which Hume sees as providing support for *R.T.* independently of his methodological doctrine that there can be no necessary connec-

tion between any one object (or kind of object) and any other object (or kind of object).

Were not the memory tenacious to a certain degree, had not men commonly an inclination to truth and a principle of probity; were they not sensible to shame, when detected in a falsehood: Were not these, I say, discovered by *experience* to be qualities, inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony. A man delirious, or noted for falsehood and villainy, has no manner of authority with us (p. 112).

Hume's argument is not fully explicit here but he seems to be claiming that since we sometimes discover by observation and experience that some testimony is *unreliable* (i.e., "A man delirious or noted for falsehood or villainy has no manner of authority with us") then we must discover the general *reliability* of testimony by the same method. But this surely has only to be stated to be seen to be invalid, for the fact that observation can sometimes uncover false testimony does nothing toward showing that the general reliability of testimony depends upon observations in the way *R.T.* requires.

Furthermore, the fact that observation sometimes lead us to reject some piece of testimony needs to be set against two other facts, namely:

(a) That other testimony sometimes leads us to reject some piece of testimony without personal observation entering into the matter. Consider, for instance, Hume's *very* example of the man noted for delirium or falsehood or villainy. Connected with this is the very important fact that our concepts of checking, verifying and falsifying are not inherently individualistic. The individual does the checking and verifying but this does not mean that she must rely exclusively upon her own personal observations. Suppose someone makes some allegations that are sufficiently important or disturbing not to be taken as face value. We subject them to scrutiny by cross-examining the witness and when this does not settle the matter we check on the witness's credentials. This latter task invariably involves trusting some other people whose credentials inevitably remain themselves unchecked. A surprising number of acute epistemologists have failed to see this point, just as Hume himself seems to ignore it in the passage quoted above.[12]

(b) That testimony sometimes leads us to reject some piece of observation. There are many different sorts of cases here. In philosophical discussion about perception one is apt to hear quite a lot about people who "see" a table in front of them in optimum observational conditions

but become convinced that there is no table there because everyone around them says there isn't. Less fancifully, this case springs from those in which the testimony of others assures us that we are or are not hallucinated. Furthermore, there are often situations where we accept correction of our ordinary mis-observations from the reports of others:– "Look at that herd of cows", "They're not cows they're rock formations". Or we observe a scuffle between three men and the upshot is that one of them is stabbed. There were four of us observing it and I hold that the man stabbed himself but the others maintain stoutly that one of the other two, namely Smith, delivered the blow. I capitulate. Surely this could be the reasonable thing to do in some circumstances. Indeed, it would seem equally as valid, on Hume's line of argument, to claim that since testimony sometimes leads us to abandon an observation then we rely upon observation in general only because we have established its reliability on the basis of testimony. But I think Hume would hardly be happy with *this* employment of his mode of argument.

Finally, it is worth remarking on the fact that the points made in the last few paragraphs and indeed a number of those made in the earlier analysis of the *R.T.* programme are reflected elsewhere in our epistemological landscape. Consider memory. Sometimes an individual discovers that his memories are false because they do not adequately consort with his present perceptual experience. He may think he recalls a large flowering gum tree in a certain familiar park at a certain spot but when he goes there to admire it, there is no sign of its ever having been there, though he soon comes across it in a nearby golf course which he recalls frequenting. Here individual observation (plus or including a little inference) shows memory to be fallacious. In the passage quoted above from Hume there is at least the hint of a reductionist thesis about memory which might begin from such facts as this. (Hume says that the "tenacity" of memory is discovery by experience to be a quality in human nature and he sees this as a stop on the way to the justification of testimony.)

Any suggestion, however, that the general reliability of one's memory is to be established by present perceptual experiences cannot be seriously entertained since, unless we take its reliability for granted, to some extent, then we cannot even gather the empirical evidence which is supposed to make the case for or against memory's connection with reality. The position of the tree may have been misremembered but to establish this we have to accept at face value a large number of memory deliver-

ances, such as, that *this* is the park in question, *that* the golf-course frequented in the past, and *this* the previously-encountered tree, not to mention the fact that present observation itself rapidly assumes the status of memory and must needs do so to count as empirical evidence for an *R.T.* type justification of memory.[13] Moreover, parallel to the case of testimony, we often correct memory by memory and correct or reject apparent observations which conflict with memories. So, I may seem to glimpse a friend in the corridor of a building but reject the evidence of sense because I recall that he is in another country. Here we have a more or less conscious intellectual process but the influence of memory on perception can be more direct as when I believe that my friend is in another country and so actually fail to recognise him visually when, upon his unexpected return, he is before my eyes. There are also, of course, intimate relations between testimony and memory as epistemological sources, indeed, all our basic sources of information are closely interwoven. But this is a topic for another occasion.

Let us conclude by asking whether the collapse of Hume's reductionist project and the undermining of its associated ideal of "autonomous knowledge" leave room for any aspirations to a robust degree of cognitive autonomy. The development of post-Enlightenment commitments to freedom and autonomy, in both the intellectual and the practical spheres, has in fact been implicated in more or less extreme versions of individualism, but this connection is not inevitable. Just as the autonomous agent need not utterly renounce his dependence upon others, even at the deepest levels of his existence, so the autonomous thinker need not entirely renounce some degree of fundamental reliance upon the word of others, but rather should deploy it to achieve a genuinely critical stance and a viable independence of outlook. One needs intellectual autonomy to achieve a feasible degree of control over the beliefs one acquires and to ensure that one's thinking is appropriately responsive to one's actual cognitive history and present intellectual environment. Nonetheless, the independent thinker is not someone who works everything out for herself, even in principle, but one who exercises a controlling intelligence over the input she receives from the normal sources of information whether their basis be individual or communal. Similar considerations would seem relevant to the concepts of individual moral and political autonomy though we cannot explore this adequately here. In so far as these concepts depend upon cognitive autonomy, the implications of our discussion should apply, but, in

addition, any defensible notion of moral autonomy, in particular, must allow at a fundamental level for the importance of moral example and for the proper influence of embodied goodness. In any case, the Humean picture of testimony supports an ideal of epistemic autonomy which is illusory, and which has, incidentally, been particularly harmful in educational theory. Once it is abandoned, we are free to construct a more realistic and serviceable concept of autonomous thinking.[14]

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NOTES

[1] J. L. Mackie, "The Possibility of Innate Knowledge", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1970) p. 254.

[2] A more comprehensive assault upon the model is contained in my book *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, Oxford University Press, 1992. The present article is a revised version of a chapter in the book and contains a radically rewritten account of my original critique of Hume's views which first appeared as "Testimony and Observation" in the *American Philosophical Quarterly* **10** (1973). That article has been extensively cited in the growing literature on testimony, and the present extended, clarified and developed version may be of particular interest because of that.

[3] Sect. 88, David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford, 1957. All quotations hereafter from this work are taken from L. A. Selby-Bigge's Second Edition of the *Enquiries* published by Clarendon Press, Oxford. Bracketed page references in my text are to that edition.

[4] J. L. Mackie, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

[5] See, in addition to the contributions in this volume, Bimal Krishna Matilal, *The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language*, Oxford University Press, 1990, especially, Chapter 6.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] It may appear that part of this difficulty could be met by recourse to the qualification "report of a so-called expert" but this is mere appearance since we require some assurance that we are checking the reports of those who are not merely self-styled experts but widely acknowledged as such and this sort of assurance could only be had by reliance upon testimony.

[9] There is perhaps a problem in working out what he is up to and hence a puzzle as to how we are even entitled to speculate that his utterance means *this* but suppose that there is enough about his behaviour to permit us to conclude that he is soliloquizing in the fashion of one who is struck by the existence of that particular tree in that particular garden.

[10] My remarks are specifically about public languages. I do not mean to deny the possibility of private languages. Whatever sense can be given to the idea of a private

language, the possibility or indeed existence of such languages is irrelevant to the problems about testimony discussed, since testimony essentially involves communication in a public language. Wittgenstein's objections to be possibility of a (certain sort of) private language have never seemed to me persuasive though I cannot be certain that I have understood the argument(s).

[11] I have not of course proved that our reliance on testimony may not be "justified" in some other manner. Bertrand Russell, for one, has attempted in *Human Knowledge; its Scope and Limits*, (New York, 1948) to justify testimony by recourse to a principle of analogy and H. H. Price in *Belief* (London and New York, 1969) by recourse to a methodological rule. I discuss their views in my book.

[12] Part of Elizabeth Fricker's argument for the view that testimony is "a secondary and not a primary epistemic link" seems to depend on the assumption that the sort of evidence a person must have for the reliability of a witness if he is to be credited with knowledge of some reported fact has to be non-testimonial. See her "The Epistemology of Testimony" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume LXI (1987)*, especially section III, and particularly pp. 75–78. Her general position puts her close to Hume (with certain important qualifications) and her claim that "testimony is not an autonomous source of knowledge" (p. 78) is very much in the spirit of the outlook I am criticising.

[13] An analogy between the difficulties facing Hume's purported justification of testimony and those facing such a justification of memory is drawn by George Campbell in his perceptive essay *A Dissertation on Miracles* published in 1762 by Kincaid and Bell, Edinburgh. Campbell's critique of Hume is mostly concerned to vindicate theological reliance upon some miracles but his first three sections offer a penetrating critique of Hume's philosophical assumptions concerning testimony. Some of his comments foreshadow part of my case against Hume. He detects, for instance, the ambiguity inherent in Hume's use of "experience" and accuses him of arguing in a circle if relying upon communal experience (which he calls "derived") to justify testimony and of restricting the scope of our knowledge absurdly if relying upon personal experience to turn the trick. The first point he handles well but the second is not properly developed. He does not discuss the language or correlation problems raised here at all. I became acquainted with Campbell's essay only when rewriting my original article "Testimony and Observation" (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1973). The dissertation has recently been rescued from long and unjustified neglect by Lewis White Beck and reprinted by Garland Publishing (New York, 1983).

[14] I have discussed some of the issues associated with intellectual autonomy in my book and there is an interesting discussion of cognitive autonomy in Frederick F. Schmitt, "Justification, Sociality and Autonomy" in *Synthese*, Vol. 73 (1987). I have benefited from reading Margaret M. Coady's Master of Education thesis "Authority, Reason and Education" (University of Melbourne, 1972) and her paper, "Autonomy and Individualism" in the *Cambridge Journal of Education* (1974). Another good article on intellectual autonomy, which deserves to the better known and which is sensitive to the difficulties faced by reductive approaches to be epistemology of testimony, is Anthony Quinton's paper, "Authority and Autonomy in Knowledge" in *Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain*, Supplementary Issue, Vol. 5 No. 2, 1971.

MICHAEL DUMMETT

TESTIMONY AND MEMORY

The law distinguishes, among the things that a witness knows, those that he knows 'of his own knowledge', and allows him to testify only to them. This is in part because his confirmation of another witness's testimony adds no weight to it if he derived his knowledge only from that other witness's having told him. That is not the only reason, however. Only in special cases, such as a deathbed declaration, is second-hand evidence admitted at all. That is due both to the impossibility of testing it under cross-examination, that is, of probing its foundations, and to the well-known phenomenon of the corruption of information as it passes from its source along a chain of second-hand and third-hand transmitters. Historians, on the other hand, must perforce admit information given at second or later hand, since, very often, no other is available. The prejudice of the law against it has nevertheless often exerted a strong influence upon epistemologists; those subject to this influence consider that what a lawyer would deem me to know 'of my own knowledge' marks an upper bound to what I may genuinely be said to know at all.

The tide of philosophical opinion is now flowing in the opposite direction: philosophers have become chary of denying the title of knowledge to anything which, in common unreflective discourse, anyone would ordinarily be said to know. Epistemologists of quite a recent period, on the other hand, were wont to follow an ancient tradition in sundering a genuine, strong sense of the verb 'to know' from its everyday application. In doing so, they were guided by certain principles governing the concept of knowledge which they found intuitively compelling. Which such principle, then, could be invoked to justify the ruling that, in the genuine sense of 'to know', I cannot be said to know more than what the law courts would recognise me as knowing of my own knowledge? A principle to which this role may naturally be assigned is that no-one may be said to know that for which it is possible for someone else to have better evidence, or firmer grounds, than his. If I know something by having been told, then my informant must have had better evidence than I do; or, if he did not, *someone* must have had. When one who attended a lecture informs me of what the lecturer said, his evidence is

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 251–272.

better than mine, for there is an additional opportunity for my information to be erroneous. My informant may have misheard, or misunderstood, or misremembered, in which case both of us will be astray; but, even if he made none of these mistakes, *I* may mishear, or misunderstand, what he tells me, or, later, may misremember it. Hence, according to this principle, I know, at best, only in what its proponent considers to be in the weak sense of having been truly told and not forgotten; but, having evidence less strong than could be had for the proposition in question – indeed, less strong than that which my informant *does* have – I do not know at all, in the genuine, strong sense of 'know'.

How, then, is the principle to be applied? I knew yesterday, say, that I was sitting in a garden, for I saw the garden all around me. Am I now able to know, in the philosopher's strong sense of 'know', that I was sitting in a garden yesterday? Certainly, for the lawyer, I can know this of my own knowledge, for there is no-one who can offer better evidence to this effect, though others can corroborate it if they saw me there: but can the philosopher allow that I genuinely know it? I know it because I remember sitting in the garden: but should this count as having the strongest conceivable evidence? It is certainly not the strongest evidence anyone could have for that proposition: for, while I was sitting in the garden, my evidence was stronger. It is very like the case of knowing through having been told: it is only because I had stronger evidence yesterday that I can claim to know now. It was stronger, because there was less opportunity for a mistake. I might have been deceived, and have been sitting in some place cunningly got up to look like a garden; but today there are further possibilities of error that did not exist yesterday, such as that I am confusing what I was doing two days ago with what I was doing on that immediately preceding today, or mistaking a dream for an actual occurrence, or misremembering in yet some other manner. Memory may be said to be the testimony of one's past self. Does the epistemologist's principle allow one to claim genuine knowledge of anything which one knows only by remembering having witnessed it?

Perhaps to apply the principle so strictly as always to reject such a claim would be to abuse it. Perhaps we ought not to interpret it as denying knowledge to anyone on the ground that he has not the best possible evidence for the truth of the *proposition* he claims to know: for this would rule out, not merely all knowledge of the occurrence of a future event, but, equally, all knowledge of any observable past event; it would render our 'genuine' knowledge in the highest degree evanescent. How, then,

should we interpret it – if we are to subscribe to it at all? Perhaps only as demanding that, if I am at any time to sustain my claim to know something, it must be impossible for anyone to have, *at that time*, better evidence than I do for what I claim to know. The principle, thus interpreted, is certainly more liberal than under its strict interpretation. But has it not become too liberal? Under its lax interpretation, it could not rule out knowledge of the future, which many philosophers have declared impossible in principle, in the strong, and allegedly genuine, sense of 'knowledge'. I fully intend to give a lecture tomorrow morning, and know of nothing that is likely to prevent me from doing so. It is of course possible that someone else presently knows of something that might prevent me, and also knows how I may circumvent this obstacle. But if, in fact, no-one knows of the likely occurrence of any such obstacle, and if, in fact, I shall lecture tomorrow, without having to overcome any particular obstacle, it holds good that no-one is, or could be, in a better position than I to judge that I shall be lecturing tomorrow; and then, under the lax interpretation of the principle, a knowledge of this fact may now be attributed to me. Those who deny the possibility of a knowledge of the future are usually motivated by some stricter version of the principle. However strong may be the evidence that someone now has for some event's occurring tomorrow, the evidence available tomorrow for its then occurring – or not occurring – must be stronger; and hence no-one can *know* today that it will occur.

This argument has a certain speciousness. The lax interpretation of the principle has the discouraging effect of robbing it of cogency; the strict interpretation the yet more unwelcome effect of excluding the possibility of knowing the past. Of course, we can patch up the principle to make it yield precisely the result we hanker after. To do this, it is enough to substitute 'at that time or subsequently' for 'at that time' in the foregoing formulation of the lax interpretation. The principle, thus emended, reads as follows: If I am at any time to sustain my claim to know something, it must be impossible for anyone to have, at that time or subsequently, better evidence than I now do for what I claim to know. Under this third interpretation, the principle allows knowledge of the past, but rules out knowledge of the future, just as intuition – some people's intuition, at any rate – would have it do. Of course it does; for it has been expressly framed to have just those consequences. But, for that very reason, it lends no support to, and provides no justification for, intuition. We are inclined to think that, while we may have well-founded

beliefs about the future, we could not, in principle, *know* what was to happen; at the same time, we should be horrified to think that the same held good concerning the past. To vindicate these views which we find ourselves disposed to hold, we ought to appeal to some principle not overtly asymmetrical with respect to past and future; one, such as that enunciated above, which makes knowledge, by fiat, asymmetrically related to past and future has no probative force, but merely reiterates what our unreflective inclinations predispose us to think.

Knowledge *is* asymmetrically related to past and future, it may be objected; that is to say, we stand in different cognitive relations to them. All the more reason why we should have no need to *make* knowledge asymmetrical with respect to past and future by fiat. If it is already asymmetrical about this axis, we are not required to adopt a temporally asymmetrical criterion for what is to count as knowledge: the asymmetry ought to show itself when we apply a criterion formulated symmetrically, if that asymmetry resides in the nature of things, and not just in our language.

There is no doubt that we are cognitively related to the past in a different way from that in which we are cognitively related to the future. Memory delivers to us information, not mediated by inference and independent of our wishes, concerning what we have previously witnessed, and is largely outside our control: we cannot decide *what* to remember, and only to a limited extent whether or not to remember. Our non-inferential information about the future is constituted by our intentions, and is of a quite different character. It scope is much more restricted, namely to our own actions and what is under our control; and it is itself under our control. We form intentions, modify, revise and abandon them; and we do so in the light of our wishes. Do these differences justify an asymmetrical criterion for what is to be reckoned as knowledge? Can they justify denying the title of knowledge to a conviction, founded on inductive evidence, on our own intentions, or on a mixture of the two, that some event will occur next week, on the ground that, even if the conviction is sound, we shall next week have better evidence than now for the occurrence of that event? If so, can they at the same time justify according the title of knowledge to a conviction, founded on inductive evidence and on memory, that some other event took place last week, despite the fact that, last week, we had better evidence for its occurrence than we have now? Of course, we have the right to use the word 'knowledge' as we wish, and hence, if we so choose, to apply

it in a temporally asymmetrical manner; but, if we do, is this because such a use happens to accord best with our conduct of our lives, or are we responding to some intrinsic difference between a well-founded conviction concerning the future and a well-founded conviction concerning the past?

Suppose that I know of myself that I frequently misremember events that I have witnessed, but seldom fail to carry out an intention I have formed. Despite my faulty memory, I have, on some occasion, a strong recollection of a scene at which I was recently present, and no specific reason to doubt it. I have also formed a resolution about a course of action to be undertaken tomorrow, and no reason to expect any impediment to executing it. Some philosophers, whose number is probably greater nowadays than it used to be, find no difficultly in the notion of knowledge of the future, in any admissible sense of 'knowledge', no matter how strict. Others, however, among whom I should include myself, feel disposed to allow that, in the case imagined, my recollection constitutes knowledge of the past scene, but to deny that I could claim to *know* what my actions will be tomorrow. What can motivate such an inclination? The answer, 'The fact that my conviction about what will happen tomorrow may prove to be wrong', is surely inapposite. My conviction may indeed prove to be wrong; but so may my recollection, and, given my assumed character, is much more likely to do so.

The reason lies, rather, in this. My recollection may well be wrong; but, so long as I trust it, I cannot separate the knowledge I suppose myself to have now from the knowledge I surely had at the past time. For the former is derived from the latter; more exactly, it simply *is* the knowledge I had as an eyewitness, maintained in being. By contrast, my intention to act in a certain way tomorrow, though intrinsically more trustworthy, is not derived from the knowledge I shall have tomorrow of how I am then acting. The two pieces of information concerning my actions on that day have different sources, and neither derives from the other; my actions derive from my previously formed intention, but my knowledge of those actions as I perform them does not so derive. This does not necessarily involve a contrast between knowledge by observation and knowledge in intention. The knowledge I shall have tomorrow of what I am then doing may be partly based on observation, but may be largely constituted by the non-observational knowledge we have of our voluntary actions as we are performing them – a type of knowledge stressed long ago by Professor Elizabeth Anscombe in her

well-known book, *Intention*. But, even if the knowledge I shall have tomorrow of my actions is wholly of this non-observational character, it will not *derive* from the intention I have today to act in that way: my *actions* may derive from that intention, but my knowledge that I am performing them does not.

This serves to explain why, whatever we may think about the possibility of knowing the future through our own intentions, or through observed regularities, or through a mixture of the two, we cannot refuse to accept foreknowledge as genuine knowledge. Christ knew that St. Peter was going to deny him, not because he read Peter's character, still less because he intended that he should so act, but because he had foreknowledge of the betrayal. In this case, therefore, Christ's knowledge of the coming event was derived from the event itself; and, for that reason, it truly ranks as knowledge of the future. The concept of foreknowledge is, of course, perplexing on its own account: not, however, as violating the principle that we cannot know the future, but as an instance of backwards causation. Christ's capacity for foreknowledge is explained theologically, by reference to his divinity. Someone who rejects the theological belief will reject the story; but that in no way impedes his ability to *understand* the story, or his willingness to allow that, according to the story, Christ *knew* that Peter would deny him.

All this leads, not to yet a fourth interpretation of our principle, but to a modification of it. The new version will run thus: no-one may be said to know something if there is or could be someone possessing evidence for it both stronger than his and derived from a different source. No temporal asymmetry enters into the formulation of this revised principle. It allows us to have knowledge of the past. It rules out the possibility that, constituted as we are, we should know the future; and yet it admits that, if there is such a thing as foreknowledge, it is genuine knowledge. It thus accords with intuition; at least, with the intuitions of those disposed to believe that our ordinary convictions about the future, however strong, do not amount to knowledge. For those so disposed, it therefore satisfies all the criteria we have so far elicited from our discussion for being the principle we seek, that is to say, the right principle.

Those who think that our everyday assurance about the future, based on our own intentions and on inferences from the present by appeal to principles of causality, sometimes constitutes knowledge could not have accepted our original principle, under its strict interpretation, and would

have had no motive for emending the lax interpretation by making it temporally asymmetrical and thus ruling out knowledge of the future, though not of the past. Equally, they will be unable to accept the revised principle, since it, too, excludes knowledge of the future on an ordinary basis. They would presumably therefore have had little inclination to espouse a principle of this kind at all, a principle, namely, at which we here first arrived by considering the motivation for denying that testimony can transmit knowledge. In assessing the strength of this motivation, it remains of interest to enquire how the concept of knowing something by being told it by another fares in the light of the revision of the principle which our discussion has led us to adopt.

Before we do so, however, we must revise it still further. As was pointed out to me by Mr. Timothy Williamson, the revised principle, as stated, admits a Gettier-type objection. Suppose that I know some proposition "A" to be true, and consciously infer from this to the truth of the disjunctive proposition "A or B". Given that it is possible for someone to know the truth of the proposition "B", he might likewise infer the truth of "A or B". Now, if someone arrives at a deductive consequence of things that he knows by means of a long and intricate argument, it is reasonable to count that argument as part of his evidence for accepting that consequence, rather than confining the evidence he has for doing so to the evidence he has for the various premisses of the argument. It nevertheless appears contrary to reason to dispute that, if someone knows a given proposition, and directly and explicitly infers from it a weaker proposition which is, glaringly, a logical consequence of it, then he knows that weaker proposition also. If so, the one who, knowing "A" to be true, inferred that "A or B" was true, must be said to know the truth of "A or B"; and likewise the one who, knowing "B" to be true, drew the same conclusion. But the source of the latter's knowledge of the disjunctive proposition is plainly quite different from the source of the former's; and it may be that his evidence for the truth of "B", and hence for the truth of "A or B", was stronger than the other's evidence for the truth of "A". We then have here a counter-example to the revised principle.

We can escape this refutation only in one of two ways. Either we must deny that someone who knows a proposition also knows an obvious consequence of it that he expressly draws; and this seems counter-intuitive. Or we must hold, since "B" might have been any proposition, that no-one knows anything for which he has evidence possessing

less than the maximal strength which the evidence for any proposition whatever might have; and this is flagrantly contrary to our intentions in formulating our revised principle, and, indeed, to the deliverances of intuition. 'Intuition' here means merely the sum of our untutored inclinations to apply the term 'knowledge' to certain cases and withhold it from others. Such intuitions may be an uncertain guide, but only in so far as they either lead us into irresoluble antinomies, or present us with a concept palpably of little interest or use. Until they have been shown to do one or the other, we are bound to respect them, since after all the concept of knowledge is our concept. We are therefore debarred from either of these two escape routes, and must amend our principle or abandon it.

An adequate emendation must necessarily be somewhat complex; the following appears to meet the case. Let *E* be a piece of evidence for a proposition "A". We may then define the proposition P(*E*, "A") to be the strongest proposition for which *E* is evidence as strong as it is for "A". Our emendation of the revised principle will then be as follows: no-one may be said to know a proposition "A" on evidence *E* if it is possible for someone to have evidence stronger than *E*, and derived from a different source, for the proposition P(*E*, "A"). Having stated this emendation, we may in what follows ignore it: for, in all the examples considered, P(*E*, "A") will coincide with "A".

Our revised principle did not involve the asymmetry between past and future embodied in the formulation of the third interpretation of the original principle. It also corrected another asymmetry. The second or lax interpretation of the original principle exhibited no asymmetry between past and future; but we set it aside as allowing extensive knowledge of the future. That second interpretation did, however, involve another asymmetry: it treated the times at which the purported knowledge is possessed differently from the subjects to whom it is ascribed. It denied a subject's claim to knowledge as a given time if, at that time, it was possible, either for that subject or for any other, to possess stronger evidence for the content of the purported knowledge. Under this interpretation of the original principle, the time at which someone possesses evidence for the proposition is question is crucial; but the identity of its possessor is quite irrelevant. Why this difference? If it matters *when* the evidence is available, why should it not equally matter *to whom* it is available? If, in this second formulation of the unrevised principle, we were to interchange subjects and times, we should arrive at the

following: no-one can be said to know the truth of a proposition if it is possible that *he* should have, come to have, or have had, better evidence for it than in fact he has. We may call this the second lax interpretation of the original principle. The first lax interpretation allowed knowledge of previous or subsequent events, both of which the strict interpretation appeared to rule out; but it might well be construed as excluding knowledge of other people's sensations or inner states. I see you scratching, and conclude that you have an itch; but can I, according to the first lax interpretation, claim to *know* that you have an itch? According to that interpretation, I cannot do so if it is possible for anyone else at this time to have stronger evidence that you have an itch than I do; but surely you are in just that position. You *feel* the itch, whereas I just see you scratching: surely you have better evidence. I may, of course, ask you, 'Do you have an itch?', and you may reply, 'Yes'. Yet you may have misheard or misunderstood my question, or I may have misheard your answer, or you may have been lying: and so you still have the stronger evidence, or perhaps we should say, you are in a better position to judge. The second lax interpretation concurs with the strict one in denying any possibility of knowing the past or the future; but it does allow me to claim that I know you have an itch, because *I* could never have better evidence for this proposition than I now have. Of course, we could combine the first and second lax interpretations to produce a third, maximally lax, one. On this maximally lax interpretation, the hypothetical cases which defeat a claim to knowledge by merely being possible must be restricted to those in which the stronger evidence is possessed at the given time by the claimant himself. But we are no longer in the business of seeking a satisfactory interpretation of our original principle: we have rejected that principle altogether in favour of our revised principle. The present excursus has been solely for the sake of pointing out another advantage of that revised principle. The third interpretation of the original principle involved an asymmetry between past and future, and that seemed unjustifiable. The second interpretation – that is, the first of our lax interpretations – involved an asymmetry between times and subjects; and that seems equally unjustifiable. Our revised principle involves neither asymmetry; and this should strengthen our confidence that it – or, more properly, its emended version – is correct.

How does the revised principle handle the case of my claim to know that you have an itch? Well, if I merely see you scratching, you have a

better ground on which to judge that you have an itch than I have; moreover, my ground is not derived from yours. The principle will therefore in this case adjudicate my claim unfavourably. But, if I ask you, and you tell me, the matter stands differently. You will remain on firmer ground, indeed; but my ground for judging you to have an itch is derived from yours, and therefore has the same source; and so, according to the revised principle, the fact that you are in a better position to say, and that there is more scope for error in my case than in yours, does not defeat my claim to know.

It may be said that this is no complete solution to the problem of our knowledge of others' sensations. If I see you drop a heavy weight on your foot and then hop about, clutching that foot and uttering agonised cries, do I have to ask you before I can claim to know that you have hurt your foot? Surely not: but this does not call our revised principle in question. Doubtless there are cases in which the subject is in no better position to know what sensation he is experiencing than the onlookers: that only means that neither of our principles, however interpreted, will impugn the onlookers' claim to know. Often, however, as it seems to me, I cannot know unless you tell me, even though, in some cases, I may have good grounds for an opinion. The revised principle is the only one which rules in such a case that, before you tell me, I cannot know, but allows that, if you do tell me, then I do know.

The analogy between memory and testimony is very strong. In forming a belief, or adding an item to one's stock of knowledge, on the strength of a memory, one does not, in the normal case, arrive at it by any process of inference. There are exceptions. If I know that my memory is particularly unreliable, and I have the impression of remembering having witnessed some event, I may reflect on the probability that, in this instance, my memory has misled me; estimating that, in the particular circumstances, this is highly unlikely, I may conclude that the event indeed occurred. An inference is here required to rebut a doubt prompted by experience. But, in the normal case, no particular doubt arises. I remember something as having happened in my presence; and my remembering it *is* my adopting the belief, or my coming once more to know, that it took place. I perform no rapid surreptitious piece of reasoning to the effect that I am under the impression that I remember the event, that in my case such impressions usually prove to be veridical, and that therefore it is likely that the event occurred: I simply judge

the event to have occurred, in the consciousness that my warrant for the judgement is that I remember it.

Exactly the same holds good for coming to believe or to know something by being told it. In the normal case, this is not effected by any process of inference. There are, again, special cases. I may know, from experience, that a particular informant is generally unreliable, through dishonesty or proneness to error, or that he is especially unreliable about a certain subject-matter. I may therefore consider, concerning something he has told me, the probabilities that he is mistaken or deceiving me, and decide that, in that specific case, the probability of either supposition is low, and so conclude to the probable truth of what he said. But such reflections are exceptional. If someone tells me the way to the railway station, or asks me whether I had heard that the Foreign Secretary has just resigned, or informs me that the Museum is closed today, I go through no process of reasoning, however swift, to arrive at the conclusion that he has spoken aright: my understanding of his utterance and my acceptance of his assertion are one; I simply add what he has told me to my stock of information.

It might be questioned whether these features of memory and of the receipt of testimony are epistemological principles or mere psychological phenomena. Maybe it is simply in our nature to accept the deliverances of memory or the assertions of others without, usually, any scrutiny or reflection; but may it not also be that, if we are to possess knowledge acquired by either means, we must be able to supply as backing an argument corresponding to the inference we omitted to draw? According to this suggestion, if I am to be said to know what someone else has told me, and do not know by any other means, I must be able to supply a specific ground for supposing my informant himself to have been well informed on the matter and to have been speaking truthfully, even though, in originally accepting what he said, I did not advert to those grounds. Likewise, if I am to be credited with knowing something I once witnessed and have subsequently remembered, I must be able to supply a specific ground for supposing that, in this case, my memory was veridical, even though, when the recollection first came to me, I trusted it without adverting to the ground I had for doing so. If either of these suggestions – let alone both – were adopted, we should have to confess to knowing pitifully little. Try the experiment of building up a stock of knowledge from a base consisting only of what you know from present observation and present ratiocination, prescinding, at the

outset, from all that you remember. At the first stage, admit only those memories which, on the basis only of what you presently know, you have a particular reason for supposing to be reliable. At later stages, if you ever reach a later stage, admit only such memories as you have, at that stage, reason to rely on. It is plain that the outcome of this exercise will be to leave you reckoning yourself to know practically nothing at all. You cannot, at the initial stage, appeal to past experience or past regularities, or any general knowledge of what usually happens, to supply a warrant for trusting any of your memories; and therefore you will not contrive to add any of them to your meagre initial stock. In fact, you will not advance beyond your initial position: you will be trapped in a cognitive solipsism of the present moment.

The same applies to the experiment of building up a stock of knowledge from what you know of your own knowledge, that is, independently of anything you have been told. In this experiment, you will be allowed at any stage to add information you have received from others only if, at that stage, you have specific grounds for taking it to be trustworthy; and, at the outset, you may add such information only if such grounds are to be found within your unaided observation and reasoning. This time you may get a little way beyond your initial position. Able to appeal to memory, you may be in a position to assure yourself that certain informants are reliable reporters of what they themselves observed. You will, however, seldom be able to add to your stock of knowledge anything you were told by someone who himself had it from someone else: for, to do that, you would have to know who your informant's informant was, and have independent evidence that *he* was reliable. It is again plain that the body of knowledge which you will end up with as a result of this second exercise will be miserably thin; you are trapped in something not far extended beyond cognitive solipsism.

These considerations show that, if the concept of knowledge is to be of any use at all, and if we are to be held to know anything resembling the body of truths we normally take ourselves to know, the non-inferential character of memory must be accepted as an epistemological principle, and not as a mere psychological phenomenon. Memory is not a *source*, still less a *ground*, of knowledge: it is the maintenance of knowledge formerly acquired by whatever means. Certainly knowledge, like everything else, is subject to decay. Certainly knowledge first acquired long ago is less secure than knowledge at its first acquisition. But it is the same piece of knowledge as that originally acquired, and,

if it has neither corrupted nor come under particular suspicion of having corrupted, it is still *knowledge*. If error has crept in, it is no longer knowledge; if our assurance has failed, it is no longer knowledge: but, if it has suffered damage of neither of these kinds, we need no further warrant for it than that which made it knowledge when we first acquired it. We need no particular reason to take things to be as we remember them, save when we have some weaker contrary ground for not so taking them; but we always need a particular ground for declining to take them as we appear to remember them.

To view the matter otherwise is to destroy, not only the concept of the past, that is, of the world as having a temporal extension, but also the concept of a person. We are what we are, good or bad, because of our history; and we know what we know because of our cognitive history. What we are are people, who develop and interact, acquiring a picture of the world constantly added to and modified, and in part crumbling; and this picture includes ourselves, as persisting agents and subjects of a stream of variegated experience. To deny that knowledge persists is to convert us into momentary agents and momentary subjects. It is also to dissolve the conception of the world itself as a changing reality or shifting habitat; for it is only through our memories that we form any conception of the past and hence of time. To preserve that conception, we must acknowledge the propriety of the practice we originally adopted when we first learned to use the past tense. Our adoption of it was due in part to a universal natural disposition, in part to our acquisition of the linguistic device of tenses. For us, the first and only possible route to a mastery of the use of the past tense lay through our learning to employ it for the expression of our memories. At that stage, there was no possibility of failing to take things as having been as we remembered them; the only way in which we could have avoided doing so was by failing altogether to acquire any conception of how things had previously been, that is, to acquire the concept of the past. We had not the conceptual equipment required for doubting our memories; and to have done so, if we had been capable of it, would have been to violate a linguistic rule, thereby manifesting our failure to grasp the meaning of the past tense. As adults, our grasp of its meaning is enormously richer, allowing us in every case to attach a significance to the question whether we have remembered correctly. Our understanding of the past tense, our concept of the past, is nevertheless still founded upon the base which constituted our initial imperfect grasp of it: the assumption,

namely, that memory is the retention of knowledge previously acquired. To reject that assumption by supposing that acceptance of our memories always requires specific justification therefore continues to embody a fundamental misunderstanding of our own language, and hence of our own being: it subverts the very concept of the past.

It may well be thought to have been unnecessary to have argued all this at such length: to very few nowadays would it appear contentious. The point of doing so lies in the almost exact analogy between memory and testimony; for the principal object of our enquiry is to establish on what grounds it is proper to allow that we can acquire genuine knowledge by means of testimony, and, in particular, to arrive at grounds that retain their validity in the face of an admissible form of restrictive principle of the kind with which we began. In the case of testimony also, if the concept of knowledge is to be of any use at all, and if we are to be held to know anything resembling the body of truths we normally take ourselves to know, the non-inferential character of our acceptance of what others tell us must be acknowledged as an epistemological principle, rather than a mere psychological phenomenon. Testimony should not be regarded as a *source*, and still less as a *ground*, of knowledge: it is the transmission from one individual to another of knowledge acquired by whatever means.

If remembering something is to count as retaining a knowledge of it, it must have been known when originally witnessed or experienced; if it was derived from a misperception or misapprehension, the memory cannot of course rank as knowledge. The same naturally applies to taking something to be so, having been told it: the original purveyor of the information – the first link in the chain of transmission – must himself have known it, and therefore have been in a position to know it, or it cannot be knowledge for any of those who derived it ultimately from him. There is in practice far more danger that what is transmitted by testimony is not knowledge, either because it has deteriorated in transmission or because it was not knowledge in the first place, than that what is retained in memory is not knowledge. We cannot always be sure of the status of what we unhesitatingly take to be true: and so we often think we know what we do not know, even when it is in fact so, and often know what we do not feel certain, and therefore do not know, that we know.

Just as the mode of my present knowledge of some fact may consist in my remembering it, so an individual's personal acquisition of a piece

of knowledge may consist in his having been told it. One of the many things language does for us, however, is to render knowledge a communal possession, or at least a communicable, and so transmissible, property. There is a fluctuating body of knowledge possessed in common by a community, not of course in the sense that all its members are cognisant of everything it comprises, but in the weaker sense that it is in principle accessible to all. It is in reference to this knowledge possessed by the society as a whole that lecturers and writers – historians and scientists in particular – say, 'We know this, we do not yet know that'. There is, indeed, also a larger body of personal knowledge, for the most part of less importance, which is still communicable, but the means of access to which is far less clearly marked. Certainly knowledge, like everything else, is liable to be corrupted in transmission. Certainly knowledge acquired by transmission through many mouths or hands is less secure than knowledge as apprehended by its discoverer. But it is the same piece of knowledge as that originally discovered, and, if it has neither been corrupted nor come under particular suspicion of having been corrupted, it is still *knowledge*. If error has crept in in the course of transmission, it is no longer knowledge; if one to whom it has been passed on does not feel assured of it, he does not *know* it: but if, in being passed from individual to individual, it has undergone neither distortion nor a weakening of confidence, we need no special warrant for accepting it or for giving it the title of knowledge. The only warrant that can be demanded for it is that which relates to its primary source, which can be supplied only by its discoverer and those who know the relevant details of its discovery, or who have rediscovered it for themselves. We need no particular reason to take things to be as others inform us that they are, save when we have some weaker contrary ground for not so taking them; but we always need a particular ground for declining to take them to be as we are told that they are.

To view the matter otherwise is to subvert the whole institution of language: to subvert it in something of the way that the liar does, but more far-reachingly. If we subvert the institution of language, we dissolve our own being. Just as we are constituted by our pasts, so we are constituted by our membership of human society. We function only as distinct individuals. If we were transformed into mere components of a collective, as an army to some degree attempts to transform the soldiers, and as the Colonels' régime in Greece succeeded in a more thoroughgoing way in transforming those it employed to administer torture to

its prisoners, we should, at least as long as we remained in that condition, have ceased to function as human beings. But, equally, we function only as members of a human society. A wolf-child cannot operate as a member of a human society, indeed can hardly function at all in a human environment. He has been formed by wolf society, and can function only as a member of it; and so he too no longer functions as a human being. It would, of course, be wrong to say that either one of the Greek torturers or the wolf-child had ceased to *be* a human being, for to kill either one or the other would still be murder: but neither functions as a human being.

We are in large part constituted by our membership of a human society, and, above all, by having language and making almost unceasing use of it during our waking hours. We acquired our language from others, and could only have done so; for a language is a social institution, and cannot exist save as a social institution. It is not a rule of etiquette, or a device for saving time, that we should accept what others tell us: it is fundamental to the entire institution of langauge. There are two principal aspects to a mastery of what Wittgenstein calls the 'use' of linguistic expressions, most easily distinguished if we restrict ourselves to assertoric utterances. One is to know when we are entitled to say something; the other is to know how to act on what others say. Suppose that a child has, for some suitably restricted vocabulary, mastered only the first aspect of its use. That is, he utters assertoric sentences on appropriate occasions, namely when he is in a position to recognise the situations that warrant those assertions: he says, "Doggie is sleeping", when he observes the dog asleep, and so on. The adults can use him as an extension of their observational capacities; they can, for instance, tell from his utterance that the dog is asleep, even though they cannot see it. Is this enough for us to attribute to the child an understanding of his own utterances? Not if he remains incapable of using the assertoric utterances of others in the same way, even when they are couched in the restricted vocabulary that he knows. That is, not if he is unable to react appropriately to what others attempt to tell him. In such a case, he is unable to use others as an extension of his own powers of observation. He has not begun to master the second aspect of use: he does not know what it is to act on what others say, and he therefore does not know what it is to take what they say as true.

This is a fantasy, of course: we do not learn first the one aspect of use and then the other, but acquire them both simultaneously. We can,

however, imagine a dog that has been trained to emit certain special signals by barking in a particular way in certain observable situations, say when a wolf is approaching the fold. Can we say that the dog is telling us that a wolf is near? Certainly not if he evinces no particular response to another dog's giving the same special signal: he has merely been trained to give the signal in the relevant situation, and has no idea that he is telling anyone anything. If, on the other hand, he does react appropriately to hearing the signal from the throat of another dog, and especially if he does so spontaneously, without having been trained to, the whole aspect is altered. The point of the fantasy concerning the child was to draw attention to two distinguishable, though closely related, components of a linguistic practice. If a child does not respond appropriately to an assertion addressed to him, or if, when it calls for no immediate response, he fails subsequently to modify his actions accordingly, then he does not understand the sentence used, even if we know him able to come out with a similar sentence for himself in a suitable situation. To respond appropriately is to act on the truth of the assertion; and such a response of course involves accepting it as true. Acquiring the practice of acting on what others tell one therefore comprises learning what is involved in accepting what they say, and learning to do whatever is so involved. In this way, a disposition to accept what others tell one is central and fundamental to acquiring language at all: unless one does so, one cannot be said to understand language. As one's mastery of language deepens, one learns to curb this fundamental disposition in certain cases. One learns the various possibilities of error on the part of others; one learns also how language may be employed dishonestly. One recognises then that one may sometimes be justified in not accepting what one is told: one recognises also that, in some cases, a special reason is required for accepting it. But the foundation stone cannot actually be removed without causing the entire edifice to collapse. The institution of language, and, with it, the existence of human society our membership in which goes to constitute us as human beings and thus as what each of us is, rest upon certain fundamental assumptions: and one of these is that knowledge is transmitted by means of language. To make this assumption is to treat accepting what we are told, without the need for any further special reason for accepting it, as the normal case. About this, there is a strong impulse to say: we cannot but do so.

What would be the point of saying, "We cannot but do so"? What is

the point of Wittgenstein's saying, "Just try – in a real case – to doubt someone else's fear or pain" (*Investigations*, §303)? Surely, even if it is true that the sceptic, who believes it to be unjustified to accept what is said to one unless one has a specific reason for believing it, cannot help doing so all the same, this fact will cut no ice with him: he will continue to regard what he cannot help doing as unjustified. The point, however, is not that he cannot help doing it, but that, in so far as he can succeed in refusing to do it, he is repudiating something on which the whole institution on language rests and thereby converting the language that is his, and in which his thinking is conducted, into a private language from which the meaning will leach out.

A radical sceptic denies that we have any reason to believe what we believe. A mild sceptic merely says that, although it is reasonable to *believe* it, we do not *know* it. Suppose a mild sceptic concedes that we are often right to take what we remember as having been so or what we are told is so to be true, but maintains that we do not know either one or the other: what memory retains and testimony transmits, he argues, is *information*, but not *knowledge*. Is it important to combat his contention?

The verb "to know", as a tool of converse, plays different roles in different contexts: one cannot elicit from its manifold use a precise criterion for its application to all cases. Notoriously, it frequently signifies no more than the possession of a piece of information. Sometimes, as in "I know what he'll say", it means even less than that – something like 'I can tell you' or 'I have an opinion'. It is also often used to rule out doubt, as in "I *know* I left it in here" or "I *know* she would have telephoned if there'd been anything wrong". It is something used to claim greater authority, as in "I *know* where the Warden was yesterday, because I happened to see him". It is, I think, for this latter reason that the Creeds begin "I believe . . . " rather than "I know that . . . ". The believer is not wishing to represent his faith as doubtful; but, even if he claims the authority of divine revelation for his belief, he cannot properly say "I know . . ." if the unbeliever has the same access to that revelation as he has, the difference between them being only that the believer *trusts* it.

For all that, philosophers constantly seek a precise criterion for something to be knowledge. If no such criterion can be vindicated by appeal to the common concept of knowledge, what is the point of their quest? The point of the search is not evident in advance. It becomes

apparent only from what is found: any notion of knowledge framed by means of a precise criterion derives whatever interest it has from the criterion adopted. There is no antecedent truth about what is known and what is merely reasonably believed that would make one proposed criterion wrong and another right: we may seek no more than a way of drawing the line that marks a significant difference between what lies on one side and what lies on the other. In this essay I have operated, not with a criterion, but with a principle of distinction that, in my view, marks such a difference; I have no wish to claim that those to whom it does not appeal are objectively mistaken. There is no determinate right or wrong in this matter.

The principle distinguishes between knowledge and belief according to whether it ultimately derives from the securest possible source for information of the kind in question, but allows that knowledge can be retained and that it can be transmitted from one subject to another. It demands that the channel by which it is transmitted be a normal one; but it does not require that channel to be itself secure. A sceptic can, if he wishes, deny this, thereby confining knowledge to awareness of that with whose source the subject is presently in contact; presumably, on this basis, a mathematician could not be said to know the truth of any theorems other than those of which he could currently cite a proof. Yet, in so characterising knowledge, the sceptic cannot claim to be more in the right than one who accepts the proposed principle; he can claim only to have drawn the line in what strikes him as a more interesting place. What he cannot reasonably do is to admit memory, but not testimony, as a channel for the transmission of knowledge; the analogy between them is too close for the line to run between them.

The mid sceptic is no menace; merely an eccentric who chooses to use the term "knowledge" in a fashion that renders it largely useless. The radical sceptic proposes to do more than adjust the use of a term: he believes that we ought not to accept the deliveries either of memory or of testimony unless we have particular reason to do so. It would plainly be impossible for anyone to strip himself of every belief that would never have been formed if he had obeyed this maxim from childhood: but might it not be possible for him to follow it henceforward, though retaining those beliefs he already had, saying to himself that, while he could not rid himself of most of them, he would no longer *form* any beliefs unreasonably?

The idea that it is unreasonable to believe something to be so on the

sole basis of having been told that it is so is as myopic as the idea that it is unreasonable to believe something to have been so on the sole basis of remembering it as having been so. In believing what I am told, I may go wrong for either of two reasons: because my informant was lying, or because he made a mistake. For reasons of the kind that have become associated with the name of Davidson, we can know a priori that, among human beings generally, lying is rare. If it were not that most assertions seriously made are made in the belief that they are true, our words could not mean what they do mean. They mean what they mean because they are *used* to mean that; and it is only because lies are exceptional utterances on the part of any speaker that he may be said to be using words in accordance with their meanings, even when he is lying. In the normal case, therefore, the *presumption* must be that, in making an assertion, a speaker is saying what he takes to be true; it is not reasonable, or even a piece of prudential caution, to flout that presumption, because it is a presupposition of our understanding the assertion, or of the existence of the language in which it is couched. Reason does not demand that the presumption be maintained in *all* circumstances. It obviously does not need to be maintained when the speaker is known to be one addicted to lying; it also does not need to be maintained when there is strong incentive for the speaker to lie, save when he is known to be exceptionally honest. But to repudiate the presumption in normal circumstances is to undermine our assurance that we so much as understand the content of anything that is said to us; it therefore cannot be reasonable to do so.

Even a sincere speaker may transmit misinformation as the result of a mistake. Epistemologists are greatly occupied with mistakes, but philosophers of language frequently write as though they were impossible. How is it possible to think the thing that is not? The problem seems still to be with us. Experience makes its impacts at the periphery of our linguistically formulated theory of the world, and we adjust the theory accordingly. Our mastery of the language in which it is formulated consists in our knowledge of which adjustments are appropriate to different possible new, or recalcitrant, experiences: how, then, can we go wrong? Otherwise expressed, to understand a statement is to know what counts as entitling us to assert it; so how, if we understand it, can we ever assert it unjustifiably? In accordance with these conceptions, it ought to be that everyone who has the same evidence about something should have the same beliefs about it; but, notoriously,

opinions are infinitely various. The most important reason is the salience of hypothesis and judgement in the formation of our beliefs. We adopt what seems to us to be the only, or the most likely, explanation of the facts; but we fail to think of the best explanation, or, by ill luck, to hit upon the true one. In deciding what to think, we are forced to estimate probabilities when objective measures or objective tests of significance are lacking, and our estimates differ without the common content of our thoughts coming into question. Since error is so pervasive, is not the sceptic right to refuse to accept the judgement of others, and rely solely on his own?

It is not enough to point out to the *radical* sceptic that this applies primarily to the original informant, rather than to its transmitters, and that we have already allowed that knowledge cannot be gained by testimony unless the original informant genuinely knew what he told to others, whereas if what he said expressed only his *opinion*, no-one can obtain knowledge by hearing it reported. The radical sceptic is not concerned merely with denying that knowledge can be gained from testimony; he denies that it ever supplies any reason for belief. His scepticism thus does not really relate to the process of transmission, but to the *authority* of the original informant: he is, in effect, denying that anyone can ever have the authority to tell anyone else anything.

Despite this disanalogy, to a large degree the same applies to fallibility as to insincerity: assigning to our words and those of others the meanings we take them to have excludes the possibility that more than a minority of our beliefs should be mistaken. It is here a matter of degree, however. The greater the role played by the postulation of hypotheses and the subjective estimation of probability in the formation of our beliefs, the more space there is for agreement upon meanings in the face of divergence of opinions; the less weight, therefore, attaches to any one individual's opinion. Clearly, I can accept something on the authority of another only if he has or had access to evidence I do not possess, or has reflected more upon it, or is more skilled at thinking about or judging of such matters; failing these conditions, he can merely tell me what he thinks, not what I should think. The degree and basis of another's authority will depend on the type of proposition involved. It remains that, for a great range of propositions, though mistakes can never be ruled out, there is the same presumption against them as that in favour of a speaker's truthfulness; the example of mathematical theorems asserted

by competent mathematicians suffices to show that this range does not comprise only reports of observation. Radical scepticism on this ground is as unreasonable as on the ground that I can trust only myself to tell me the truth.

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HISTORY, TESTIMONY, AND TWO KINDS OF SCEPTICISM

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a thesis traditional in Indian philosophy, advanced, for example, by D. M. Datta in Book VI of his *The Six Ways of Knowing*[1] and recently refurbished and redeployed by Arindam Chakravarti in this volume, that testimony (*śabda*) is an irreducible source and ground of knowledge. Western philosophers for the most part[2] have not so much refuted this thesis as underestimated its importance, anchoring their epistemologies in perception and inference. I think this is to be regretted, for it seems to me to be both important and true. Philosophers must come to terms with the central fact that most of our beliefs are based on testimony.

Philosophically-minded historians, however, have in one way or another paid rather a great deal of attention to testimony, and to the problem of its credibility, because it cannot be avoided in their discipline. I have already taken it as obvious that a great many of our claims to know rest on what we have been told by other people. If their accounts were somehow disallowed, then the number of our justified knowledge claims would be very much diminished. We could, nevertheless, still claim to know that some things are or were the case, if only on the basis of personal experience, including our memories, and the inferences that could legitimately be made from it. But if history is about events beyond the reach of our personal experience, lying in a more distant past, then disallowing the accounts of other people would undermine its possibility. History depends in an essential way on testimony. Claims about the past that are beyond the reach of individual experience and that do not depend on testimony are merely archaeological. If claims about the human past are, to the contrary, based on our own experiences and memories, then they are no more than reportage or journalism. Another way of putting this is to say that history is, in some large sense of the word, "documentary" (or "testimonial") history.

This fact, that history depends in an essential way on testimony about events now past, has often made it seem especially vulnerable to scep-

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 273–295.

ticism. There are, of course, sceptical positions which doubt or deny the existence of the past *per se*, simply because the non-existence of the past is apparently compatible with all of our present experience, including our present memories. Russell was too generous when he said of this that "like all sceptical hypotheses, it is logically tenable, but uninteresting."[3] But, more important for our purposes, this very general scepticism has little to do with the reliability of testimony, nor does it account for the fact that there are sciences, geology among them, which are also about the past and which seem (except among Christian fundamentalists) far less vulnerable.

The more limited scepticism about the past that has to do with testimony is based on the problematic character of documents. The old "inferential" variant is that the *authenticity* of these documents can never be established. The new "post-structuralist" variant is that the *meaning* of these documents is irrecoverable. I will argue that both variants on the theme of testimony and historical scepticism are false. But my aim is not simply to restore the credibility of history. It is also, and more importantly, to defend the general thesis that trust in the testimony of others is an *a priori* condition of the possibility of understanding them. We doubt or deny the trustworthiness of testimony only at the price of a fundamental kind of incoherence.

2. THE OLD SCEPTICISM ABOUT HISTORY

The case for the old or "inferential" scepticism about history is easily made. It derives, as already indicted, from the various difficulties encountered in trying to establish the authenticity of documents that read, or an oral tradition that reports, "Caesar died on March 15, 44 b.c. (or some equivalent), on the floor of the Senate, in Rome" and which are signed or issued by the doctor in attendance or other eye-witnesses. In the first place, it is impossible in principle to compare the document with the fact, and thus to verify its accuracy. History as so far construed presupposes that those who write reports and those who read them are not contemporary. In the second place, there are no natural laws on the basis of which we can infer from the document or report before us as effect to Caesar's death as its cause, in the same way that we can infer from a deposit of sedimentary rock to the prior existence of an inland sea. The claims which geologists make about the past cannot be verified directly either, but the inferences on which they rest are grounded in a

way that comparable claims about history are not. In the third place, those who leave documents of any sort behind, the bulk of which tend to be institutional if not also political, are often interested in preserving their reputation and those of their parties, whatever the truth might be. Who knows but that Caesar's own account of the Gallic Wars, at several crucial places, might be a case in point. In short, there are good reasons for questioning the validity of the inference from "document D or oral tradition O reads or reports 'R'" to "it was the case that R." If wholesale scepticism with respect to such inferences seems excessive, they appear nonetheless to be less credible than those generally encountered in the sciences. This asymmetry, and the grounds on which it rests, convinced Descartes and many like him that history is not, perhaps cannot be, a genuine branch of knowledge.[4]

3. THE OLD SCEPTICISM ABOUT HISTORY UNDONE

Philosophically-minded historians have responded to this charge in a variety of ways.[5] I will mention three historians, omitting such crucial figures as Vico, not only because they are particularly interesting, but also because their views have important implications for what follows. As we shall see, their positions constitute progressively enlarged and strengthened defenses against the old scepticism and contain a development of the idea of history itself. They are Thucydides, Hume, and R.G. Collingwood.[6]

In a prefatory statement to his history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides says that he reproduces the speeches (*logoi*) given by the various participants ("keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of what was really said"), as he and others heard them, and describes the main events (*erga*) involved as he and others saw them. This is to say that the testimony on which his history rests was taken from ear- and eye-witnesses.

I think[7] that his method has a double import. On the one hand, only the testimony of eye-witnesses is credible. Hearsay evidence is inadmissible. On the other hand, that testimony has itself been subject to "the most severe and detailed tests possible," the most important of which was cross-examination because of the "want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other,"[8] and obtained from as many sources

as possible. In these respects, Thucydides is simply applying to testimony the practice of Greek (and for that matter, our own) courts of law. Testimony by eye-witnesses which survives cross-examination (which hangs together, in which no holes can be found) is to be admitted in evidence. The search for a coherent story follows naturally, of course, from the impossibility of directly comparing the testimony with the events in question. If the result does not constitute a science properly so-called, by either Greek or contemporary standards, still it conforms to the rules of evidence on the basis of which judgments of guilt and innocence are routinely made.[9]

The strength of this method in countering classical scepticism about history is clear. In the first place, it does not follow, Thucydides would say, from the fact that it is impossible to compare the document or (much more important in this case) the report with the fact that it is impossible to verify its accuracy, for we can compare various reports of the same fact with one another (where there is but a single report, there our claims are much more tenuous) and examine the reporter in detail, to test his or her memory.[10] In the second place, the inferential chain is so short that it does not need to be backed, as would be the case with distant events, by an appeal to putative "laws" governing human behavior. In the third place, bias can be uncovered by taking the testimony (and the motives) of those on all sides of the war into account. Thucydides does not pretend that the application of his method is easy (it "cost me some labour"), but he clearly thinks that in the hands of another historian it would yield very much the same conclusions.

But the strength of the method is also its weakness. Thucydides makes clear that a main motive of his work is to provide an account of the war while the events described are still fresh in everyone's mind.[11] This makes of it contemporary history, if not a contradiction in terms, then a severe limitation of the subject. We secure epistemic status by restricting our sources to eye-witnesses and keeping the chain of inference very short, and in the process forego the attempt to provide knowledge of any period not very near to us in time.[12]

Hume addresses this foreshortended, and by the end of the 18th century generally abandoned, conception of history. He was, of course, a prolific and first-rate historian, and it is surprising that in his philosophical work there is not more detailed attention to questions of methodology. Still, there is enough both to allow for a lengthening of the chain of inference and the use of documents, and thus histories of

a distant past, and to undermine the alleged asymmetry between history and the natural sciences.

In Book I, Part III, Section IV of the *Treatise*, Hume writes " . . . We believe that Caesar was kill'd in the senate-house on the *ides* of *March*; and that because this fact is establish'd on the unanimous testimony of historians, who agree to assign this precise time and place to the event," and then proceeds to spell out more precisely what this involves. We have before us or remember seeing a particular document, which may in fact be a later "historical" account of the events in question and not that of an eye-witness. Thus our immediate data are what Hume calls "impressions." These impressions have been associated by us with, they are the "signs" of, certain ideas, and "these ideas were either in the minds of such as were immediately present at the action, and receiv'd the ideas directly from its existence; or they were deriv'd from the testimony of others and that again from another testimony, by a visible gradation, 'til we arrive at those who were eye-witnesses and spectators of the event."[14] We recover the event, so to speak, by passing through a chain of words to spectators of it, a process which assumes both that the meaning of the words does not change in the course of transmission (for us as for those who wrote them, the words are "signs" of the *same* ideas) and that those at the far end of the chain believed what they said. The first assumption is crucial. It implies that we can take the words in the document at face-value and "look through them" to the event. We might call this the "transparency" thesis. Slightly more precisely, it is the view that the transition from the sign to the thing signified is habitual and unmediated. From Hume's perspective, it was not simply a presupposition of the possibility of documentary history as he understood it, it was also a cornerstone of his theory of language and belief.

Hume then goes on to consider the objection that the length of the chain of testimony will of itself weaken and eventually undermine the beliefs based on it.

> 'Tis evident there is no point of ancient history, of which we can have any assurance, but by passing thro' many millions of causes and effects, and thro' a chain of arguments of almost an immeasurable length. Before the knowledge of the fact cou'd come to the first historian, it must be convey'd through many mouths; and after it is committed to writing, each new copy is a new object, of which the connexion with the foregoing is known only by experience and observation. Perhaps, therefore, it may be concluded from the precedent reasoning, that the evidence of all ancient history must

now be lost; or at least, will be lost in time, as the chain of causes encreases, and runs on to a greater length.[15]

But this is clearly contrary to common sense. Testimony, in this case concerning the death of Caesar, does not decay in the course of transmission and over time. Why not? Because

tho' the links are innumerable, that connect any fact with the present impression which is the foundation of belief; yet they are all of the same kind, and depend on the fidelity of Printers and Copyists. One edition passes into another, and that into a third, and so on, till we come to that volume we peruse at present. There is no variation in the steps. After we know one, we know all of them; and after we have made one, we can have no scruple as to the rest. This circumstance alone preserves the evidence of history . . .[16]

The idea here seems to be that the transmission of testimony amounts to no more than than a series of copies of an original and that (although he does not make this explicit) we know on the basis of our own experience that, except for the occasional typographical error or misplaced galley, copiests tend to be reliable.[17]

It is worth noting that in providing his solution, Hume has shifted the terms of his problem. Its statement included the fact that testimony must be "convey'd thro' many mouths" before it reaches the first historians (who must perforce be writers). But the solution says nothing about the problems of oral transmission which have led most mainstream historians (perhaps with some prejudice) to consider only written documents as evidence. It simply ignores these, and concentrates instead on "hard copies," the transmission of which (Western culture since the advent of Christianity insists) is much less problematic.

The final part of Hume's case concerns not so much the transmission as the reliability of testimony, the grounds of our belief in its veracity.

there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators . . . our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of eye-witnesses. It being a general maxim, that no objects have any discoverable connexion together, and that all the inferences, which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction; it is evident, that we ought not to make an exception to this axiom in favour of human testimony, whose connexion with any event seems, in itself, as little necessary as any other. Were not the memory tenacious to a certain degree; had not

men commonly an inclination to truth and a principle of probity; were they not sensible to shame, when detected in a falsehood: Were not these, I say, discovered by *experience* to be qualities, inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony. A man delirious, or noted for falsehood or vilainy, has not manner of authority with us.[18]

Since this passage has troubled several commentators,[19] I quote it at length.[20] But the three points I wish to draw from it seem to me to be relatively straightforward. First, testimony has no special authority; documents or reports testifying that such and such an event took place do not guarantee either its existence or the accuracy of its description. Second, we have, nevertheless, a great deal of experience on the basis of which the reliability of testimony in general can be supported. Not only is it our common experience, in fact, that most people tell the truth most of the time, there are also good reasons, again drawn from experience, why this should be so. But what is true of testimony in general should be extended, other things being equal, to historical testimony. Moreover, we have good reasons for trusting the testimony of some people more than others, and on particular occasions: none of it is to be treated uncritically.[21] Third, as the rest of Hume's philosophical position implies, the reasons we have for admitting at least some testimony in evidence are no different in kind, and thus in principle no worse, than the reasons we have for admitting other sorts of evidence. There is no important asymmetry, at least not in this respect, between history and the natural sciences.[22] Historical knowledge is thus for him a system of reasonable beliefs based on testimony, and no other kind of knowledge is more than a system of reasonable beliefs.[23]

The 150 years that elapsed between Hume and Collingwood saw the introduction and deployment by historians of a variety of additional and in certain ways more powerful critical methods, the most important of which, especially insofar as ancient history was concerned, was the application of stylometric and other philological criteria to documents to determine their date and authorship, and the vastly increased use of non-literary sources to determine their credibility. As one result, by the end of the 19th century, the discipline of history enjoyed great prestige, and sceptical doubts concerning its reliance on testimony were little more than a memory. But the chief innovation, at least on my reading of Collingwood, was what might be called an intentionalistic theory of historical understanding. It rather radically transformed the defense

against the old scepticism and completed its undoing by reconstruing the role and credibility of testimony. It also involved a re-thinking of the nature and function of history itself.

The intentionalistic theory, which had its roots in the Romantic Movement and more especially in Hegel's philosophy of history, may be described very roughly as follows. To understand an action or statement is to grasp its meaning, and to grasp its meaning, in turn, is to know the intention with which it was performed or uttered. We come upon a native tribe, performing strange movements in a circle, chanting all the while. We make sense of *what* they are doing as soon as we know what it is they are trying to do, what their intention is. Perhaps in this case it is to bring about rain. If so, then as soon as we know what they are doing we know *why* they are trying to do it; they are trying to make it rain. This pattern of understanding, perfectly satisfactory (it is assumed) insofar as accounts of human behavior are concerned, is to be contrasted with explanation in the natural sciences which makes reference to causal laws, is potentially predictive, eschews intentions, and distinguishes rather sharply between "what" and "why" questions.

In just the same way, to understand a statement, or a document, is to grasp the intention with which it was uttered, or written, to grasp what the author wanted to tell or inform us. If testimony is to serve as historical evidence, it must in this way first be *interpreted.*

From this perspective, Hume's views are naive. For it is an explicit part of his position that the intentions of the author of a document must be the same as ours, the signs signifying the same ideas for him or her as for us. Hume undoubtedly thought this a simple corollary of the virtually self-evident thesis that in all times and places humankind is pretty much the same (has the same thoughts, the same drives, the same desires, and so on).[24] For Collingwood, on the other hand, this thesis is not simply not self-evident, it is false. The evidence, historical and anthropological, indicates wide variation. There are no invariable "laws" governing human behavior. Moreover, a number of documents taken at face (i.e., contemporary) value are senseless; they require a great deal of interpretation before they become meaningful. But this effort at interpretation requires establishing the author's original intention, and this in turn requires a knowledge of his or her context, intended audience (and what it might reasonably have taken for granted), personal idiosyncracies, in short, requires our ability to imaginatively reconstruct the author's outlook.

It follows that Hume's views are also ahistorical. For in naively thinking that some past author meant what we do when she wrote down descriptions of an event, we impose our meaning on her, whereas it is the goal of history precisely to understand the past in its own terms, what *she* meant in a particular situation, and to move us out of the present.[25]

Our approach to testimony, formerly the words of "authorities" and now that of "sources," is accordingly complex. We read a document. Why was it written? With what purpose in mind? What was the author trying to say? To whom? How would his or her contemporaries have understood it? And so on. There are for Collingwood at least two corollaries. One is that the inference from "document D or oral tradition O reads or reports 'R'" to "it was the case that R" is always by way of our understanding that the author of D or O wanted to tell or inform us that R. The other corollary is that as historians we are no longer interested exclusively (and on occasion not even primarily) in the literal truth of the documents. They must first be interpreted so that their meaning is clear, and then used, if not always to establish that a particular event took place, then to illuminate the situation in which someone wanted to make or could not have avoided making a false claim. The past can still be recovered through the documents left us. In this sense the "transparency" thesis remains correct. But it is a great deal more difficult than Hume imagined. The text by itself does not provide all of the materials necessary for a determination of its meaning. At the same time, of course, the effort required, by putting us back into the context of the author's beliefs and desires, undercuts at a stroke any sceptical worries that might have arisen about veracity, transmission, or bias.[26] But taking account of these is just what is required if the historian is to understand the document in the first place. Abandoning a simple-minded empiricism is the prerequisite to making history intellectually credible, a lesson that some historians and philosophers now think is true of the natural sciences as well.

Collingwood's own work as an historian was primarily in two fields, Roman Britain and modern intellectual history. I think that this fact is significant. The evidence for claims about Roman Britain is largely physical, fragments of buildings, implements, utensils. It is natural, perhaps inevitable, to ask of a fragment, "what was this used for, what was its purpose?" in the attempt to establish what it is. There is no sharp separation in the case of objects of human manufacture between what they are and the ends for which they are created. The evidence

for claims about intellectual history is entirely documentary, But here especially we are interested not so much in recovering an event, but a text itself. At the very least, we first have to ask what the author meant, before we can begin to criticize or investigate whether what he or she said is true. It is not surprising, therefore, that something like Collingwood's view has enjoyed wide currency among intellectual historians. Thus, for example, Quentin Skinner, who takes his own as the (newly) "orthodox" position, simply assumes as an axiom that "We need to recover an author's intentions in order to understand the meaning of what he writes."[27]

4. THE NEW SCEPTICISM ABOUT HISTORY

The new scepticism, unlike the old, is an active topic of controversy among historians.[28] although most philosophers seem either to ignore or to deride it. It is associated with so-called "post-structuralist" literary theory. On this theory, words are not "signs" of anything, hence do not point, as in Hume, to the ideas or events with which he took them to be associated, the meanings (and there are always more than one) of texts and documents transcend their author's intentions and are not to be understood in terms of them, and in any case the author's original intention is not recoverable. This is to say that the new scepticism is not directed so much against the inference from "document D or oral tradition O reads or reports 'R'" to "it was the case that R" as it is against the recovery of the intentions which renders such an inference possible in the first place. If the post-structuralists are correct, then the "transparency" thesis in both its original and amended versions must be given up, and with it, apparently, the traditional concept of testimony-based history. What is to replace it is another matter.

The first thesis, that words are not "signs" of anything, need not especially concern us. Historians, it has already been suggested, have long since abandoned the Humean view of documents and the referential theory of meaning on which it rests. Indeed, the old problem of scepticism was rooted in the problematic character of the reference which documents make; the events, now past, to which they "point" can be no more than intentional objects, hence the possibility of a determination of one by the other is ruled out. At best we can compare documents or oral reports with each other, and on occasion with whatever physical evidence remains. History is in this respect to be contrasted with physics,

where the events which a particular lab report describes can always be reproduced and compared with it. Correspondence must be abandoned in favor of coherence. Collingwood responds to this old problem of scepticism in a slightly different way: historical events are not the data on the basis of which the truth of documents or testimonies can be determined; rather, the documents are themselves the data which, when interpreted by the historian in the light of the intentions of their authors, support conclusions about the events which they enable us to reconstruct. The point is that both Thucydides and Collingwood, and presumably many philosophically-minded historians, grant the indeterminacy of document reference, but argue that it does not preclude taking them as evidence for their conclusions. One can, like Thucydides, opt for coherence, or, like Collingwood, construe events as intentional.

But this is not the end of the matter, since post-structuralists maintain that coherence too is a kind of rhetorical illusion[29] and that the interpretation of documents by way of the intentions of their authors rests on some mistaken assumptions. I will turn to these assumptions now, and return later to the point about coherence.

There are, in fact, two points of attack on the use that Collingwood and his successors make of an author's intentions. The stronger, and perhaps less plausible, is that the meanings of documents (on this view a type of "text") transcend their author's intentions and are not to be understood in terms of them. This is because, on the one hand, "the author" is itself a kind of fiction,[30] a story that might be told after the fact, and because, on the other hand, language is an autonomous system, words deriving their meaning from their relations with other words, having a life of its own and not under anyone's control. There is no "author" apart from the texts written or the stories told, hence no appeal can be made to the "author's" intentions to determine meaning, which in any case is always manifold and indeterminate.[31]

The second point is that, whatever the role and status of "the author," his or her intentions are in any case irrecoverable. According to Collingwood, we are to recreate the author's context and then think ourselves into it, seeing and understanding it in his or her own terms. But this, on the post-structuralist position, is impossible. We cannot somehow transport ourselves out of our own context, and the language in terms of which we experience and conceptualize the world, into another, or if we could we would not make sense of it to ourselves or others. Our understanding is itself a function of the age in which we live and the

culture to which we belong. Not only that, but we never approach a text or document innocently, but informed about the ways in which it has already been interpreted and the cultural connotations it has acquired. The historian and the documents with which he or she works are products of and embedded in historical traditions.[32]

Both points imply that the attempt to recover an original intention is misguided and naive. If the historian's inference from documents or reports to the past requires it, then there cannot be, in anything like the traditional truth-seeking sense, any such thing as history. Rather historical narratives like any other are complex fictions, literally "re-creations" of a past which itself has no meaningful existence apart from our unanchored descriptions of it.[33]

There is a complication to this case which should be mentioned here. It concerns the primacy of writing on which many post-structuralists insist. Quentin Skinner, for one, hopes to rescue the intentionalist account of historical understanding by enlisting the aid of speech act theory.[34] On this theory, speech acts (which are taken as paradigm for all statements) involve the intentional manipulation of language on the part of some agent to perform certain actions and they are rooted in concrete social contexts on which their meaning depends. This is to say that the theory re-instates agents (and eventually authors), intentions, and meanings. If language-use generally is to be modelled on speaking, then meaning can be determined with reference to the speaker's purposes and situation. Once again, it would seem, we can recover a document, and with it the past, through a determination of intention and context.[35]

But even if speech act theory provides a solution to our problems in the case of speaking, it is inadequate in the case of writing. The authors of documents and their readers stand in a very different relation than speakers and hearers. The latter do not bear an "historical" relation to each other; they share the sort of common social-linguistic framework or "background" that makes reference possible. But writers and readers do not share, at least when separated by any amount of time, the same reality. There is, among other things, nothing to which the author can point to anchor his or her words, and once again the text becomes free-floating.[36] It is not necessary for this criticism to hold to maintain that the converse does not hold. And the historian, or course, has mainly to deal with written documents.

It is interesting in this regard to return to Thucydides, for he seems in some curious way to have anticipated the post-structuralist critique

of writing and hence of written testimony. His data are not for the most part documents,[37] but rather reports of eye-witnesses and, crucially, speeches. Historian and eye-witness share a context in which the one interrogates, the other responds, without undue ambiguity or misunderstanding. They are not separated by history. Thucydides clearly intends to introduce us into something like the speaker-hearer situation, by providing "hard copies" a la Hume of the speeches that were in fact uttered. But again, at the very least we read the copies, and utter the speeches, in a very different context, and our Thucydides is now so encrusted with history that a comparison with the "original" makes little sense. Or so a post-structuralist might reply. Herodotus apparently read his history out loud to audiences as he composed it; perhaps the father of history understood that in some basic way only his contemporaries could grasp his meaning![38]

5. THE NEW SCEPTICISM ABOUT HISTORY DISARMED

It is tempting to respond to the post-structuralist critique by pointing out that since history as traditionally conceived, true accounts about the human past, is actual it must be possible, and that particular testimonies, far from being mere fragments of lost discourses, are evidence for the way things were. But this, of course, would be to beg the question.

There are at least two further options open to us. One is to save history by reconceiving it, as, for example, complex fictions whose reading serves certain psychological and social needs.[39] This involves, among other things, giving up the attempt to locate testimony in its original context, to recover the intentions of the author, and finally to determine its credibility.[40] The other option is to save history not by reconceiving it, but by rehabilitating the intentionalist theory of meaning which proved effective, or so I argued, against the old scepticism.[41]

I want to defend the second option, not so much because I think "presentism" (the view that history is necessarily written from a present perspective and to satisfy present needs) is an ahistorical attitude as because I don't know how the new "fictionalist" history is, *in concreto*, supposed to differ from the old[42] *and* because I think that the post-structuralist critique of the intentionalist account of understanding is ultimately unpersuasive.

In the first place, it needs to be remembered that we can both make and justify a number of crucial distinctions, among them between true

and false testimonies, genuine documents and forgeries, on which the determinability of the past depends. This point tells as much against the old sceptics as the new, but it is one that the new sceptics, with all of their emphasis on the dissolving and reconstituting power of historical narratives, are more likely to forget. In 1900, to choose but one among a vast number of such examples, A.C. Buell published a two-volume life of John Paul Jones which was both well reviewed and recommended to students at the national Naval Academy. Whenever his legitimate sources ran thin, Buell invented others – memoirs, collections of papers, a will.[43] Sometimes manufactured documents betray themselves through the age of the paper, the chemical composition of the inks, and so on. More usually they fail to cohere with other information that is reliably at hand. Buell had Jones (by way of a bogus certificate) deposit 900 guineas in the Bank of North America in 1776, when in fact the Bank was not established until 1781. This is, of course, to rely on coherence, and to admit, as we must, that "truth" in history amounts to what hangs together. It is also to allow for a certain instability in the past, for the discovery of new documents can produce a new configuration in the claims we make about it. But it is enough to make out the distinctions on which the determinability of the past depends, even if on occasion it is very difficult to apply those distinctions, and perhaps it is as much by way of "truth" as other disciplines can generate. On the other hand, when all of the available testimonies conflict, as they sometimes do, there is little point in assuming that one of them is correct, or rather what point there is lies in the injunction to look for more testimonies.

In the second place, and much more importantly, there is a clear sense in which, despite the various post-structuralist strictures, we can, indeed must, recover an author's intentions.[44] We read a document or hear a report. Except on the implausible assumption (which no post-structuralist that I know of is prepared to make) that the words are no more than inkblots to which a merely Rorschach reaction is appropriate, we can ask ourselves what they mean. This question is preliminary to such further (and post-structurally favorite) questions as: what do they *really* mean, or, what's left unsaid, or, what is to be read between the lines? We cannot determine its meaning either on the basis of our acquaintance with its referent, which has long since disappeared, or on the basis of our knowledge of the meaning originally intended by its author, since (at least in certain cases) the document or report is all we have

to go on in the first place. But another, in fact rather customary, strategy is available, and in the difficult circumstances it is impossible to see how we could dispense with it. We interpret the document or report by attributing certain intentions (more specifically, certain beliefs and desires) to the author. Whether or not these are the "real" intentions of the author is moot. This attribution allows us to understand the document or report (in a non-arbitrary way) so long as the intentions cohere with one another and are reasonable in the light of our own beliefs and desires. On this strategy, understanding thus presupposes at least that the author is consistent (coherent), desired to tell the truth, and shared many of our own beliefs. We may, in the course of time, come to revise certain of these presuppositions in particular cases, but it is inevitable that we begin with them. Or, to put the point the other way around, to the extent that we concluded that the author is illogical or her desires irrational or her beliefs false, to that same extent we would have some reason to think that we had failed to understand her.

Of course, nothing guarantees that this strategy will be successful. We might fail in our attempt to attribute a more or less reasonable set of desires and beliefs to the author, and hence fail to understand her. But if we are successful, then it is by way of minimizing the differences between the author's perspective and our own.[45] Moreover, in the absence of an alternative strategy, we have little choice but to limit the irrational desires and false beliefs we attribute to the author, if we are to understand her. Finally, if we cannot determine what might be called the "literal meaning" of everything we read and hear, still we can determine on the basis of the coherence conditions indicated those occasions on which we manage to do better and those on which we do worse.[46]

This case can, I think, be made clearer by bringing it to bear first on the "old" and then on the "new" scepticism.

First as regards the old scepticism. Hume suggests that we come to trust the testimony of others by verifying it in at least a few cases and on the basis of our own experience. But we are left with the familiar problem of justifying the induction made on the basis of these cases, particularly since they are both relatively few in number and stand in no well-defined relation to all of the beliefs we otherwise accept on the basis of testimony. The difficulty is even more acute in the case of ancient texts whose authors are little known or unidentified for, apart from an appeal to the reliability of testimony in general, there is no evidence on the basis

of which an induction could even be started. On the line of argument just sketched, however, trust in the testimony of others is a presupposition of understanding them, even though, as before, we might eventually come to mistrust it on particular occasions. Simply put, we must (other things being equal) believe what other people tell us. Put in a Kantian way, trust in the testimony of others is an *a priori* condition of the possibility of understanding. If we did not, or could not, believe what other people said, at least most of the time, then we would not, and could not, understand what they were trying to tell us. Testimony, like causality, can be given a transcendental deduction.[47]

Second, as regards the new scepticism about history, the post-structuralist critique of an author's intentions can itself be criticised.

On the one hand, while in many respects a text or document "transcends" its author, there is no way even to begin to understand what it means without ascribing certain intentions to him or her. This does not imply that "the author" is somehow the final court of appeal with respect to the "real" meaning of the text. We have already given up the legitimacy of a prior appeal to his or her own intentions in the attempt to determine meaning, and almost any text will support a variety of interpretations. But short of taking the text as completely impenetrable, the only way we can begin to make sense of it, particularly if it is in a language rather different from our own, is to supply its author (for our purposes a kind of construction) with some of our own desires and beliefs. Otherwise the text remains opaque, as in fact happens when our attempt at supplying some of our own desires and beliefs is frustrated by our inability to fit the text's expressions into some sort of consistent and reasonable pattern. A text that *completely* "transcended" its author, or whose author had figuratively "died" in its writing, would thus be for us unintelligible.

On the other hand, while a text distanced from us by history will in certain respects seem "strange," even our appreciation of its "strangeness," of how differently it must have read to its original contemporaries than to us, presupposes an extent of commonality, against which the differences can be set. There is no way that one could begin to make sense of the claim that "our" Thucydides is very different from some putative "original" except by bringing into the background all of the various ways in which Thucydides' "original" and "our" own are undergirded with a large body of common belief. Indeed, as any reader of the text must soon discover, we have a great deal in common with him;

the fact is that we *can* understand Thucydides, at times even better than he understood himself.

The same sort of point can be made about coherence. Some post-structuralists like to say that systems of "oppositions" are built into "discourses" and relative to them, as if the concepts of consistency and contradiction could not span "discourses," and hence that the whole notion of coherence were simply imposed by particular narrative structures. But again, the attempt to understand a text in the most minimal way, at something like its "literal" level,[48] necessitates attributing something like our logic to its author; surely there is no way, on the basis of our analysis of his or her verbal output, that we could discover that another logic was at stake.[49] An attack on coherence can only go so far.

One result of this line of argument, it seems to me, is to rehabilitate Hume and his 18th century colleagues against what has always seemed the most generally damaging attack on them. They are often criticised for their historical myopia, naively believing that all men in all places and at all times are pretty much the same. But in fact their wonderful cosmopolitanism rests on a very sophisticated base. Hume undoubtedly was led by his own empiricist prejudices into thinking that we simply learned, on the basis of careful study, that other human beings are in certain crucial ways like late 18th century English and French. But we don't simply learn this. It is built into our attempt to understand peoples who differ from us. Assuming nothing from the outset, and leaving their minds blank slates on which we are to write as a result of reading and hearing them, is a bankrupt procedure. It leads not to an appreciation of differences, but nowhere. This is the deep truth of "presentism": in studying the past we necessarily bring much of the present – our logic, many of our beliefs, certain of our desires – with us, as a precondition to its interpretation and understanding.

Tacitus was a near-contemporary of most of the events that he describes and in this respect is, like Thucydides, both historian of and source for the period in question. It must be admitted that he is not a perfectly reliable source. He provides his characters with speeches that they did not give[50] and his accounts of battles are often merely rhetorical. He is also rather biased, in the direction of his father-in-law Agricola and the Germans generally, and often adopts a moralizing tone. That we can isolate his bias and indicate his errors only reinforces the attack made on the "old" scepticism.[51] There is truth in history, despite the

fact that it is dead and gone, and it is not simply the "larger truth" of inspired artists, although it is also that. But perhaps more to the point is that as I read him now, I can understand Tacitus. It is necessary, of course, to know something of the period in which he lived and wrote, knowledge which in part depends upon my reading of his work. It is also necessary to attribute to him certain beliefs, the most important of which concern the motives on the basis of which human beings tend to act, and to assume that no great gulf lies between us. If I were not able to understand Tacitus in this way, I would not be able to understand his text. Is mine the "original" or "real" or "true"? I hope that it is now clear why this question is beside the point.

It is occasionally suggested that in writing and reading, as well as in speaking we carry on an extended conversation with humankind. History, in particular, seems to involve a conversation between past and present in which the giving and taking of testimony plays a central role. But a conversation requires conversants, authors and speakers whom we can understand, and this in turn requires shared beliefs and the attribution of rational desires shadowing the varied "discourses" in terms of which we manage, somehow, to communicate.[52]

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NOTES

[1] University of Calcutta, 1960; first published in 1932.
[2] Two twentieth century exceptions, W. P. Montagu in *The Ways of Knowing* (Macmillan, 1925) and H. H. Price in *Belief* (Allen & Unwin, 1969), are very much worth reading on this topic.
[3] *The Analysis of Mind* (Allen & Unwin, 1921), p. 160.
[4] *Discourse on Method*, first part.
[5] Most historians appear simply to have ignored it, and still more the often elaborate refutations and reconstructions which a few philosophers managed to provide. On the other hand, doubts about the reliability of testimony seem to have been a factor in the effort from the 17th century on to find *physical* evidence to corroborate the claims they made (the study of ancient coins was of particular importance in this connection). A more contemporary worry is that the documents left behind reflect the interests and perspective of particular social-economic classes or "elites" and thus are to be mistrusted.
[6] One source of scepticism more generally about history than about the testimonial evidence on which it is based is that "history is written by the victors." It is worth noting that Thucydides was a loser, although this fact too biases his account in the eyes of certain of his commentators who see in it an expression of thoroughgoing pessimism.

[7] Following some suggestions of Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 25ff.

[8] Book I, Chapter I, 22, from the Crawley translation.

[9] I suspect, but certainly cannot prove, that historical practice from its beginning has been much more influenced by rules of evidence and legal practices than by the data-gathering methods of the natural sciences, not surprising in that it, like the court system, depends essentially on testimony (if also occasionally on hearsay). The word *histor* originally meant something like "judge" or "witness" (someone who resolves a difference of opinion between contesting parties) and was connected with the Greek court system. See Gerald A Press, *The Development of the Idea of History in Antiquity* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), Chapter II.

[10] Thucydides does not, in fact, give his own initial reports of what he witnessed privileged status. "And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions . . . " Personal experience does not take precedence over testimony.

[11] Herodotus, too, makes obvious in the opening sentence of his *History* that he wants to set down the events connected with the Persian Wars before they are forgotten, but he is willing to extend his account to a remote past, a willingness (and a looseness) for which Thucydides criticises him. His acceptance of the testimony of Greek-speaking informants about the Asiatic background of the wars is not entirely uncritical (see I.5: "These are the stories of the Persians and the Phoenecians. For my part I am not going to say about these matters that they happened thus and thus . . . "). Still, he passes along in a rather credulous way their explanations and descriptions of fantastic practices. Perhaps he was interested not so much in the truth of the explanations and descriptions as in the states of mind which they expressed (on the assumption that what people believe, not what they know, determines their behavior), perhaps he thought, like Hume much later, that all human beings share a common core of belief (e.g., II.3, "all men know equally about the gods" may be construed in this way), a thought that would allow him to admit cross-cultural and time-spanning testimony. See the very insightful introduction by David Grene to his translation of *The History* (University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[12] Thus according to Thucydides, the ancient days of which the poets treat are "out of the reach of evidence" and time has "robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend."

[13] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by Selby-Bigge (Clarendon Press, 1888), page 83. It is significant, I think, that Hume has replaced Thucydides' agreement among eye-witnesses with agreement among historians (who have sifted the evidence according to their critical standards) and *their* testimony. What might be called "second-level" agreement is now tantamount to truth, a further indication of our *remove* from the past.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part III, Section XIII; Selby-Bigge edition, pp. 144–45.

[16] *Ibid.*, Selby-Bigge edition, p. 146.

[17] Indeed, the word "copy" already suggests that no variation or interpretation is involved.

[18] *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section X; the Green and Grose edition of the *Works* (London, 1974) volume IV, pp. 90–91.

[19] The apparent praise of testimony, coming as it does in the essay "Of Miracles," a

chief point of which is to show that "no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof," has in fact struck some commentators as ironic. But for Hume to be ironic here would be to subvert all of his work as an historian.

[20] That Hume himself was troubled by his assimilation of inference from testimony to causal reasoning is indicated by words that I have omitted: "This species of reasoning, perhaps, one may deny to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. I shall not dispute about a word."

[21] In the widely consulted *The Modern Researcher* (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1970), p. 149, Barzun and Graff summarize the critical method (as Hume might have understood it, and they continue to) as follows: "Faced with a piece of evidence, the critical mind of the searcher for truth asks the fundamental questions: Is this object or piece of writing genuine? Is its method trustworthy? How do I know? This leads to an unfolding series of subordinate questions: Who is its author or maker? What does it state? What is the relation in time and space between the author and the statement, overt or implied, that is conveyed by the object? How does the statement compare with other statements on the same point? What do we know independently about the author and his credibility?" And so on. Some points of method, in fact, go back to Thucydides. "The value of a piece of testimony usually increases in proportion to the nearness in time and space between the witness and the events about which he testifies. . . . A single witness may be quite accurate, but two witnesses, if independent, increase the chances of eliminating human fallibility."

[22] If Kant curbed the pretensions of reason in order to make room for faith, so we might say that Hume undermined physics so as to legitimate history.

[23] Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 74.

[24] According to Hume anyone who wanted to know the character of the French and English had only to consult the history of the Greeks and Romans. As we have already seen, his defense of testimony rested in part on the existence of general laws concerning human behavior, these same general laws providing the basis for explanations of historical events. In *Belief*, pp. 112ff., Price raises some interesting questions about the grounds of the most immediately relevant of such putative "laws," that most people tell the truth most of the time.

[25] Thus Barzun and Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, p. 55: " . . . whether history is put to use in the present, or simply garnered out of curiosity, or enjoyed as an object of contemplation, we can frame its inclusive definition by saying: *History is vicarious experience*."

[26] Collingwood sometimes makes the point in a metaphysical way, by suggesting that since we can think the same thought as the author of the document, i.e., since thoughts are timeless, there is no need of an inference from present to past. But no metaphysical assumptions about thoughts and time are necessary. It is enough that in reconstructing the author's context we must at the same time take into consideration what from our point of view are biases, etc.

[27] "Hermeneutics and the Role of History," *New Literary History*, **7** (1975–76), p. 214.

[28] The *American Historical Review*, June, 1989, is devoted to it. I have drawn heavily on several of the articles included, notably David Harlan's "Intellectual History and the Return of Literature."

[29] Narratives become "diversified, multifold, and full of contradictions" when fully understood. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv.

[30] "Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing more than the instance saying *I*; language knows a subject, not a person . . . " Roland Barhes, *Image, Text, Music* (Hill & Wang, 1977), p. 145.

[31] "The names of authors or of doctrines have here no substantial value. They indicate neither identities nor causes. It would be frivolous to think that 'Descartes,' 'Leibniz,' 'Rousseau,' 'Hegel,' etc., are names of authors, of the authors of movements or displacements that we thus designate. The indicative value that I attribute to them is first the name of a problem," Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Johns Hopkins, 1976), p. 99.

[32] " . . . the reconstruction of the Original circumstances, like all such restoration, is a pointless understaking in view of the historicity of our being. What is reconstructed, a life brought back from the lost past, is not the original. In its continuance in an estranged state it acquires only a secondary, cultural existence." Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Seabury Press, 1975), p. 245.

[33] " . . . writing is the deconstruction of every voice, of every point of origin, Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing." Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, p. 142.

[34] The classic texts are J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Harvard University Press, 1963) and John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1972).

[35] Oral testimony is primary in the Indian tradition to which Datta and others belong. Thus his account is in a chapter entitled "The Validity of Verbal Knowledge," and the whole discussion is framed in terms of the relations between speakers and hearers.

[36] ". . . the reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading. The text thus produces a double eclipse of reader and writer." Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 146.

[37] It is clear at several places that he must have had access to letters and decrees.

[38] There is a kind of ironic reversal here. In the perspective which the emphasis on writing and its problems forces on us, the oral tradition resumes its ancient epistemological priority (at a price for history long since noted), while Hume's documentary tradition and the mainstream concept of "critical" history is undermined.

[39] According to the traditional view, "whereas writers of fiction invented everything in their narratives . . . historians invented nothing but certain rhetorical flourishes or poetic effects . . . Recent theories of discourse, however, dissolve the distinction between realistic and fictional discourses based on the presumption of an ontological difference between their respective referents, real and imaginary . . . In these . . . theories of discourse, narrative is to be a particularly effective system of discursive meaning production by which individuals can be taught to live a distinctively 'imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence,' that is to say, an unreal but meaningful relation to the social formations in which they are indentured to live out their lives and realize their destinies as social subjects." Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Johns Hopkins, 1987), p. x.

[40] ". . . if recent developments in literary criticism and the philosophy of language have indeed undermined belief in a stable and determinable past, denied the possibility of recovering authorial intention, and challenged the plausibility of historical representation, then contextualist-minded historians should stop insisting that every historian's 'first order of business' must be to do what now seems undoable." Harlan, "Intellectual History and the Return of Literature," pp. 608–09.

[41] There are other options and other theories of meaning. As one instance, Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (Basic Books, 1985), p. 7: "In returning to the original text, I make no claims about the substantive intentions of its authors and editors, and I commit myself to no specific view of the actual history. What really happened? We don't know. We have only this story, written down centuries after the events it describes." We are, Walzer continues, "to discover its meaning in what it has meant" to subsequent generations. In proceeding thus, Walzer seems to admit both the old scepticism, that testimony (transmitted orally for the first several centuries) does not provide us with knowledge of the past, and the new, that the intentions in terms of which that testimony is to be interpreted and eventually understood are not recoverable.

[42] Interested historians seem to have written much more about the implications of post-structuralist theory for their disciplines than they have written post-structuralist histories. Historians who, following Foucault, have emphasized the centrality of "discourses" in understanding the past have generally *grounded* their claims in the usual old-fashioned way, by appealing to documents and reading them with an eye to their author's (sometimes unconscious) intentions. For a notable recent example, see Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton University Press, 1989).

[43] See Alan Nevins, "The Case of the Cheating Documents," in Robin Winks (ed.), *The Historian as Detective* (Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 201–02.

[44] What follows is inspired by Donald Davidson's well-known critique of cultural relativism; it is not intended as an accurate summary of his views. See "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1984). Davidson's discussion is framed in terms of a basic speaker-hearer situation. But I see no reason why it does not apply equally to the interpretation of documents and other texts. At the very least, it does not trade on the assumptions of speech act theory listed earlier, e.g., possession of a common language and the possibility of ostension.

[45] Even the discovery of differences of any kind thus presupposes a very large degree of commonality. For amplification of this point and its application to the social sciences see Michael Root, "Davidson and Social Science," in LePore (ed.), *Truth and Interpretation* (Basil Blackwell, 1986).

[46] Our success also typically depends on such other factors as how well we can reconstruct the context in which the author wrote, although that too depends on interpreting still other testimony and rendering it reasonable in terms of our own styles of life.

[47] In his chapter on testimony in *Belief*, Price clearly appreciates the difficulties with the Humean approach, but his own rather traditional empiricism prevents him (on my reading) from going far enough, to a frank admission that, if we are to understand others at all, we have no choice (at least initially) but to accept what they tell us as true.

[48] I understand that to some the notion of a "literal level" is paradoxical, that there is nothing but metaphor, and so on. This point deserves extended discussion. But my short

reply is to say that at the very least metaphors are parasitic on literal meanings. It is as if, to echo Frege's criticism of Hilbert, all of the expressions in a language were to be implicitly defined.

[49] This familiar point is, of course, due to W. V. Quine. See *Word and Object* (John Wiley, 1960), pp. 57ff.

[50] An inscription discovered at Lyon, France, in 1528, gives part of an actual speech of the Emperor Claudius to the Senate which Tacitus reports in the *Annals* 11.24. Moses Hadas, Introduction to *The Complete Works of Tacitus* (Random House, 1942), p. xvi, asserts that they are quite different. In fact, although Tacitus gives no more than a summary of the speech, he seems to preserve at least some of Claudius' concerns. See Document 175 in *Ancient Roman Statutes* by Johnson, Coleman-Norton, and Bourne (University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 145–46.

[51] Tacitus himself, of course, never doubts the possibility of historical truth, although he adds in the first chapter of his *Histories* that "The truthfulness of history has been impaired in many ways; at first through men's ignorance of public affairs, which were now wholly strange to them, then through their passion of flattery, or, on the other hand, their hatred of their masters." From the Hadas edition, p. 419.

[52] James Allard and Arindam Chakrabarti have made a number of very useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper, although neither would want to be in the least responsible for what remains.

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TESTIMONY, KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

Some philosophers of knowledge – a minority – hold that knowledge is categorially different from belief, so that it cannot be right to treat it as if it were some species of belief – justified, true belief, say. I count myself among these philosophers. I came to my view through reflections about testimony and the processes by which knowledge may be diffused through a community. (Much the same is true of Zeno Vendler though we end up with rather different theories). This position is apt to stir hostility on at least two counts. First, there is the power of prevailing orthodoxy. Many philosophers nowadays appear to find it incredible that anyone should think knowledge is not some kind of (superior, privileged) belief; contemporary epistemologists standardly conceive of their central task as that of unfolding what has to be true of a belief if it is to amount to knowledge. This notion of epistemology would be seriously off target if the minority view were right, so there is a good deal of intellectual capital invested in some version of the majority position. Secondly, there is a lot of resistance to the very idea that knowledge, which is conceived of as a grand thing, could possibly be obtained from mere say-so in the way I believe it can. Thus Jonathan Barnes:

> No doubt we all do pick up beliefs in that second hand fashion, and I fear that we often suppose such scavengings yield knowledge. But that is only a sign of our colossal credulity: [it is] a rotten way of acquiring beliefs and it is no way at all of acquiring knowledge.
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> ('Socrates and the Jury' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary volume LIV, 1980, 200)

Or consider John Locke's more measured eloquence:

> For, I think, we may as rationally hope to see with other Mens Eyes, as to know by other Mens understandings. . . . The floating of other Mens Opinions in our brains makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was Science, is in us but Opiniatrety, whilst we give up our Assent only to reverend Names, and do not, as they did, employ our own Reason to *understand* those *Truths*, which gave them reputation.
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> (*Essay concerning Human Understanding*, I iv 23)

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 297–313.

To anyone who thinks like this, the notion that reflections about say-so should actually issue in a theory about *knowledge*, to the effect that it is *by its very nature* capable of being communicated through mere say-so, will seem preposterous.

In this paper I am going to confront the issue between me and those who favour what I shall call a belief-theoretical analysis of the concept of knowledge, and I shall do it through a discussion of testimony. I hold that the concept of knowledge must feature *essentially* in a proper account of the testimonial process. Others, in various ways, have thought to explain the processes of testimony in a belief-centred way. My strategy will be to defend my knowledge-centred account of testimony against those who have focused their account on the idea of expressing and instilling beliefs. It will turn out that that is also to defend a view about the nature of (factual) knowledge which makes the concept incapable of analysis in terms of belief. Roughly, the institution of telling (testimony) is dominated by the idea of knowledge. It exists for the purpose of communicating knowledge and knowledge *is* what is communicated by telling when all goes well. Our concept of knowledge is the concept of something 'commonable',[1] something, that is, which is capable of being made the common possession of two or more people through simple say-so. Contrast beliefs. It is not in the nature of beliefs, considered as such, to be commonable.

I begin with a preliminary point. Advocates of the minority view need not hold that knowledge ever does, *in fact*, occur without belief; so it is hardly to the point for belief-theorists to challenge their opponents, as they sometimes do, to find cases where it is true that *a* knows that *p* but false that *a* believes that *p*. Perhaps there are no such cases. There are no cases, I daresay, of rational beings who are not featherless but that gives us no inclination to suspect that rationality entails featherlessness or that to be rational just *is* to be featherless in a suitably qualified way. (Of course, Colin Radford has produced examples where it seems we may be willing to ascribe knowledge when we would not ascribe beliefs:[2] those who adhere to the minority view have no interest in disputing with Radford; the point is, their view does not *require* that Radfordian examples ever occur in fact).

Now it may be retorted that if the rational are all featherless, that is an accident; but it does not seem at all likely that it is an accident that knowers that *p* are generally believers that *p*, and even the Radford cases, for those who accept them, don't force that conclusion. I should not

wish to deny this. I want to show how it is possible both that knowledge is not any kind of belief and that it is no accident that knowers are generally believers.

I begin, in section 1, with a sketch of the knowledge-centred theory of testimony which I have developed most fully in *The Community of Knowledge*;[3] this provides the framework for all that follows. In section 2, I examine the credentials of a different account, one presented entirely in terms of belief. We shall see that this account is quite plausible; at all events, it fits some of the facts, and it consorts well with some important modern orthodoxies about action and belief. So the question arises whether we should not prefer this or some other belief-orientated account to mine. In section 3, I address that question head-on and conclude that the concept of knowledge cannot be eliminated from our account of testimony, or reduced to something else. The concept of knowledge is to be understood in the light of its role in the linguistic practices which it dominates. In section 4, I speculate about the relationship between a subject's knowing that *p* and their believing that *p* in testimonial contexts.

1

Since, on my view, the concept of knowledge will feature essentially in a proper account of the process of testimony, I make no apology for describing the process, from the outset, as being one concerned with knowledge and, in particular, with communicating knowledge. This is, in any case, how it is ordinarily conceived. What Hume would have called the *vulgar* view has it that, under favourable conditions, I can let you know that *p* just by telling you that *p*. Indeed this provides the rationale of everyday enquiry: I ask you the way to the station because I don't know the way and want my ignorance cured in the only way ignorance ever is cured – with knowledge. When you tell me the way that is just what you purport to provide. In general, I conceive my task to be the portrayal of the conditions under which one person can remedy another's ignorance by means of say-so. In case this construal of the task is thought to beg the question against a belief-centred account of testimony, I point out that in the next section we shall be reviewing just such an account. At the end of the day the proof of the pudding has to be in the eating: I shall argue that the belief-centred account fails and that the 'vulgar' view is, in some suitably refined version, vindicated.

First some preliminaries. We are going to be concerned with factual knowledge. English-speakers use the word *know* in several ways. For example, they speak of knowing things or persons or places. It would be good to have some understanding as to why it is that the very same English word is apt for these (and perhaps other) different roles, and I am not without hope that, given a correct account of factual knowledge, it may be easier to grasp the unity of the concept. But I have nothing to say about that here. Only factual knowledge is communicable from one person to another by verbal means and my concern is with that process. Factual knowledge precisely *is* that form of knowledge which is transmissible by verbal means. Hence my hope of finding illumination about the nature of (factual) knowledge from an investigation of these processes.

This is a relatively novel approach to the philosophy of knowledge. Philosophers interested in analysing the concept of factual knowledge, or otherwise coming to understand it, most commonly focus on the formula "*a* knows that *p*" or on particular sentences which exemplify this formula. I think this is a mistake. First, there is another way of ascribing factual knowledge which deserves notice. This may be represented by the formula "*a* knows *wh*" – "Jane knows how many are coming", "John knows where she keeps the biscuits" and so on for all the various interrogative particles. Secondly and very importantly, the concept of knowledge is not only exercised in *ascriptions* of knowledge. Saying that someone *knows* something is a relatively specialised thing. To be sure, we often have an interest in knowing who does or doesn't know what (who's in the secret, who can tell us what we want to know, who needs to be kept in ignorance etc.) so ascriptions of knowledge do have a role in our affairs. But it would not be normal to (seek to) let someone know that *p*, as we frequently do, by *ascribing* the knowledge to oneself, by saying "I know that. . . . ". The usual mode for knowledge-communication is the simple indicative sentence; I can let you know that the cat is on the mat, under favourable conditions, by *saying* 'the cat is on the mat'. Finally, we not only communicate knowledge but we also seek it. And just as a simple indicative sentence can in suitable conditions convey knowledge (on the 'vulgar' view), so a simple interrogative sentence can demand it. Telling and asking are correlative types of speech-act, each of them, so I hold, dominated by the concept of knowledge though neither of them, as a rule, using it in manifest form. It is impossible that knowledge should be adequately characterised

without referring to these speech-acts; they constitute central ways of exercising the concept.

For my part, I am inclined to say there is no more to understanding the concept of (factual) knowledge than understanding the linguistic practices which it dominates. An investigation of these practices may be expected to shed light on the question, what our concept of knowledge does for us, what role it plays in our affairs, what niche it occupies in our conceptual economy. The results of recent truth-conditional analyses of know-sentences, on the other hand, tend to make these questions seem utterly baffling; one is tempted to ask, what possible use we could have for a concept which suffers from this amazing *epicyclical* complexity, generated, as it seems to be, by a series of *ad hoc* solutions to occurrent problems.

Let us, then, examine the basic process by which knowledge may be communicated verbally from one person to another. You might get to know by verbal means of a certain sort that a speaker was a native Glaswegian; but even if the speaker intended to communicate that fact, saying, for example, "I come from Glasgow", I would not say the knowledge *was* communicated unless you obtained it from what they said rather than from the way they said it. It would not be a case of transmission through testimony if you divined the speaker's origin from his accent. Nor is it a proper case of testimonial transmission when you get to know from the speaking clock that the time is 12.55. The clock which thus speaks to you is witless, and has no knowledge to communicate.

Again, an ignorant child may faithfully convey from one person to another a message which it does not in any way understand. Or you could obtain from an encyclopedia the information that Gabriel Farenheit invented the mercury thermometer. I see these modes of conveying knowledge as elaborations or adaptations of the basic process. It is only because there is already a means whereby Adam can directly let Eve know what he found in the garden (by telling her) that it is possible for him to send Abel with the message. And it is only because we have this direct mode of communication at our disposal that we can record information and preserve it for general access in encyclopedias and the like.

This rudimentary mode of communication is exercised whenever one person (directly) tells another something. It is the basic case of testimony. But hitches can occur. The informant may be mistaken or out to deceive,

the hearer may already possess, or for some other reason may not be properly receptive to, the speaker's information. I shall describe the basic process (Adam directly telling Eve what he had found) when there are no hitches.

Here is my account:

(TMW) A sincere speaker, knowing that *p* and speaking from that knowledge, utters an indicative sentence – "*p*". The hearer, being hitherto ignorant that *p*, understands and believes the speaker. The outcome is that the hearer as well as the speaker now knows that *p*.

First, let us examine the elements of this account, beginning with those that relate to the speaker. I take testimony to be essentially concerned with communicating knowledge, so I hold that it is necessary, if there is to be a successful process of testimonial transmission, that the speaker have knowledge to communicate. Thus I stipulate that the speaker knows that *p*. Moreover, it is necessary that he speak from that knowledge. This is a technical notion. Typically, he will utter an indicative sentence. But one may utter indicative sentences for all sorts of reasons and with all sorts of intentions. Invited to guess which of the three cards is the ace of spades, I say 'it's the one in the middle'. Here I was invited to guess, and in this context that is what I was doing; I would not have been *telling* the trickster or anyone else that it was the one in the middle even in the unlikely event that I knew it was, having perhaps glimpsed a tell-tale mark. Guessing is one sort of speech-act which we may execute by uttering an indicative sentence. There are many others. For example: venturing an opinion – 'Who do you think will win?', 'She will'; voicing an aspiration – 'what are you going to be when you grow up?', 'I'm going to be an astronaut'; expressing doubt – 'The *Vicar* did it?' uttered in a sceptically interrogative way. And so on. Telling (indicative, not imperative, telling) is *par excellence* the speech-act for imparting knowledge. This is not to say it is always successful. The speaker may be mistaken, the hearer, as we shall see, may not produce the right uptake. But though telling is, so to speak, the archetypal speech-act for communicating knowledge, it should be noted in passing that there are others which deserve the generic description *speaking from knowledge* and which may, in certain circumstances, convey knowledge. Thus I might get to know that you were wounded at some great battle when I overhear you rem-

iniscing with your old comrades in arms. You were not *telling* them (or me); you were, I suppose, sharing old memories. But your speech-act was of a type which purports to be knowledge-based and which is therefore capable of imparting knowledge.

Let us now turn to the hearer. First, he must understand the speaker. This is a complex idea. He must understand what the speaker says, understand, that is, the sense and reference of his utterance. The speaker says 'the cat is on the mat'; if this knowledge is to be conveyed to the hearer, then the hearer must understand what the sentence means and also which cat and mat are referred to in that utterance of the sentence. These aspects of understanding we can, perhaps, take more or less for granted. There is a third aspect of central importance. The hearer will not obtain knowledge unless he understands correctly that the speech-act is of the knowledge-imparting type, an act, that is, of speaking from knowledge. When he hears me say, referring to the ace of spades, 'it's in the middle', and takes me, correctly, to be guessing, he will have no inclination to think that he has *learnt* where the ace of spades is. On the other hand, if he thought I was *telling*, then he might think this, though, as we shall see in a moment, this is not a *necessary* consequence of his so interpreting my speech-act.

This brings us to the last point. If a testimonial process is to go through successfully, the hearer must *believe the speaker*. It may seem incredible that I should think the successful conclusion of a process of knowledge-transmission should involve belief. That is because it is easy to assume that if I believe you when you tell me that *p* then, simply, I believe that *p* on the occasion of your telling me that p; and, of course, (so the thought runs) there is more to knowledge than just belief. But this reaction is based on a misapprehension about what it is to believe a speaker. It is *not* for me to believe that *p* when you tell me that *p*: I might believe that *p* independently of your say-so and think you were lying (ineffectually, since what you said was, as I believe, true); in such a case I should not believe *you*. Nor is it necessarily the case that I believe you if I believe that *p* because you have told me that *p*. Suppose I think you are out to deceive me by double bluff: if I read your intention in this way I shall end up believing that *p*, and believing it because you told me that *p*, but again, not by virtue of believing *you*. This is precisely what I do not do if I suspect you of insincerity. Insincerity corrupts, and if I suspect that you are guilty of abusing the speech-act, I shall not produce the uptake required for a successful communication

of knowledge. This is why I included sincerity, at the start, as a condition binding on the speaker. To believe you when you tell me that *p* is to believe that you are *imparting knowledge* through this speech-act. If I take you to be performing a speech-act of the right genre – *speaking from knowledge*, in particular if I take you to be telling, then I am bound to react to your performance in some way which is appropriate to that understanding. Believing you is one appropriate kind of response here, the kind required if there is to be a transmission of knowledge; alternatively, I might disbelieve you or withhold judgement on the question whether or not to believe you. In the normal case, where everything goes smoothly and without hitch, you, knowing that *p*, tell me that *p*, and I believe you. Through this uptake, I begin to know what originally you knew and I did not. It should be added that this uptake does not always deliver knowledge; I might be mistaken in thinking that you knew that *p*. But if I am not mistaken, and you performed a speech-act of the right genre, then your knowledge is conveyed to me.

In this set-up, there is, on the speaker's side, an *intention* to impart the knowledge that *p* through an act of telling. This is the kind of intention Grice called 'M-intention': that is, an intention to produce in the hearer a certain effect by means of the hearer's recognition of the intention. In fact, as we have seen, there is, in the case of telling, a small repertoire of responses which the hearer might produce as a consequence of his recognition of the speaker's intention of imparting knowledge: the speaker looks to be believed, but it is open to the hearer to disbelieve him, or withhold belief; only if the speaker is believed is his intention properly consummated. But he could not complain that his intention had been misunderstood if the hearer disbelieved him or withheld belief. On the other hand, he would have every reason to complain if he were believed when, for example, he used the indicative mood to ask an (ironic) question.

If this understanding of testimony is anywhere near correct, it follows that Jonathan Barnes's strictures on say-so with which I began are very ill-judged. And so they are. What can he suppose such speech-acts as telling and asking are for? The truth surely is that we have evolved with these speech-acts in our linguistic repertoire precisely because there is a benefit in our being able to acquire information originally gathered by others. Moreover, I would not regard it as an objection to my view that the knowledge a hearer ends up with by virtue of believing a speaker

may not be well understood. Understanding is a fine thing and Locke, whose objection to my kind of position I also reported at the outset, was right to esteem it. But it does no good to confuse understanding with knowing, or to withhold the title of knowledge from whatever is not (fully?) understood. On the contrary, knowing that it is the case that *p* may give one a strong incentive to seek to understand that fact. *Pace* Locke, that is the position of many of us with respect to the propositions of science, and also, surely, of scientists with respect to their data before they have framed a satisfactory theory.

I believe the position I have outlined here articulates the 'vulgar' view of testimony. It is a view which does not on the whole find much favour in modern (post-Cartesian) philosophy. It is, therefore, of interest that in important respects it appears to coincide with doctrines about testimony promulgated many centuries ago in the Nyāya tradition in India. There are, to be sure, so far as I can see, some crucial differences. On my view only certain kinds of indicative speech-act are capable of communicating knowledge. But the idea that knowledge *as such* is communicable by verbal means and that testimony is not to be treated as if it were a species of inductive evidence is common ground. Furthermore, there is a shared perception that with this understanding of the nature of knowledge and of testimony a distinct set of questions arises for philosophical investigation, a set of questions which does not occur with other views about knowledge. Of course, if the 'vulgar' view is broadly correct this cross-cultural convergence should not be in the least surprising.

2

When I turn to other modern writers who have examined this matter I find, for the most part, a very different story. With some exceptions,[4] it is more or less standard to describe the whole testimonial process in the vocabulary of belief. Grice's treatment of utterer's meaning has been influential here. Consider, for example, the following:

> . . . in communicating, people mean to induce in their hearers beliefs about what they themselves believe. In particular, when I tell you sincerely that it's raining, I mean at least to convince you that I believe it's raining even if I fail to convince you that it really is. So when *a* tries sincerely to tell *b* that *p*, he means at least to give *b* a correct belief about *a*'s belief that *p*. (DH Mellor, 'Conscious Belief' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1978, 96)

This notion of meaning to induce in the hearer a belief about the speaker's belief, derives from Grice.[5] It is not convincing. When I tell you that it's raining I would not normally mean to convince you that I believe this; still less would this be my primary intention. Speakers normally expect their sincerity *to be taken for granted*; this involves, in the case of telling, that they expect their hearers to assume without question that they believe what they say. You would do well to be suspicious of a speaker whom you took to be intending to *convince* you that he believed what he said! The assumption of sincerity (sometimes disappointed, of course) is fundamental to the practice of what Vendler has called telling the facts. Take it away and the practice is undermined. What the speaker *intends* when he tells someone that it's raining is normally quite different.

Elizabeth Fricker has a different belief-focused account of testimony, which at any rate ascribes to the speaker some sort of real communicative intention. It pretty well mirrors my account, in the vocabulary of belief and is, therefore, a useful contrast:

(TEF) A *speaker*, believing that P, and wishing to communicate this belief, makes an utterance which constitutes his asserting that P; his audience, a *hearer* observing and understanding it – that is to say recognising it as the speech act that it is – as a result comes also to believe that P.

(Elizabeth Fricker, 'The Epistemology of Testimony' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* supplementary volume, 1986, 69)

Now this way of describing the process raises an issue about knowledge. So Fricker continues:

Developing an epistemology of testimony is developing a specific characterisation of the features of an exercise of the link [sc. of testimony] which makes it a *favourable* one – one, that is, in which the belief acquired by the hearer is or can be knowledge.

Notice to begin with that no question of this sort arises for me. It is a central point for me that in normal cases what begins as knowledge in a speaker is conveyed through testimony, uncorrupted, to a hearer. I take the theory of testimony to be a theory about how that transmission is accomplished. So my account has no space in it for an epistemology of testimony as Fricker conceives of it. Here there is a deep

theoretical difference between us. It does not follow, of course, that my account has no space at all for epistemological investigations; but such investigations will have to be framed differently.

What may be said in favour of (TEF)? First, up to a point at least, it fits the facts. Few would deny that the sincere speaker *does* believe that *p*, and that this belief in some way grounds his speech-act; he would not be telling someone that *p* if he did not believe it, or at any rate he would be *abusing* the institution of telling if he didn't believe it. Again, few would deny that at the end of the process, when it goes through without hitch, the hearer also believes that *p*. The presence of these beliefs seems to be an inevitable consequence of the participants' (conscious) engagement in the process and it is no accident that they have them.

Next, imagine someone who believes it false that *p* but wishes to describe a particular testimonial process in which the speaker tells the hearer that *p* and obtains the uptake he looks for. Because he believes it false that *p* he cannot ascribe knowledge that *p* either to the speaker or to the hearer; that is, he cannot model his account on (TMW); but he can follow (TEF), ascribing the belief that *p* to both participants.

Clearly, it *has* to be possible to describe testimonial processes in ways which do not commit the describer to the truth of *p*. So there must be a way of describing them in which the concept of knowledge does not occur in a primary role. This is because particular episodes of testimonial transmission are indifferent to the truth of *p*. The earth is not at the centre of the universe, but this fact did not prevent our mediaeval forebears from telling others that it was and getting the reception (believing the speaker) that they looked for from their hearers. It seems likely, then, that a properly detached, scientific account of the process may ascribe beliefs to the participants in the process but must not ascribe knowledge as such. That is, it can follow (TEF) but it must not follow (TMW).

Finally, the belief-centred way of thinking about testimony fits with larger theory. Practical concerns motivate many of our dealings with information. You want to catch the London train so you ask the porter what platform it leaves from and he tells you it leaves from Platform 11. Now orthodoxy has it that actions result from the co-operation of desires and *beliefs*. What *you* need to guide you to the attainment of your desires is true beliefs; and what *we* need to explain your action is knowledge of your desires and (regardless of their truth) your beliefs.

There is no place earmarked for *knowledge* in the theory of action: the concept is dispensable. In our example, we shall understand why you made for Platform 11 when we discover that you wanted to get to London and had been led to believe (as we say) that the London train left from that platform; and what you wanted and hoped to get from your enquiry was whatever, when added to your desire to get to London, would promote that end – true belief about the right platform for the London train. With luck the porter will instil just the belief you need. And now it is tempting to follow this thought further. Given that we normally think of an enquirer as seeking knowledge, and given that a practically concerned enquirer will want whatever it takes to further the satisfaction of his desires, it seems plausible to explicate knowledge for all practical purposes in terms of belief. So we might come by this route, too, to a belief-theoretical account of knowledge.[6]

3

Perhaps the truth of the matter is this: (TMW) describes the process of testimony in the vernacular style, but for serious, scientific purposes something like (TEF) is to be preferred. This satisfies the requirements of objective detachment and, unlike (TMW), presents matters in a way which allows us to keep epistemology and psychology decently distinct.

I do not think this view of the matter can be sustained. (TEF) founders on its description of the speech-act and the intention associated with it. It has the speaker wishing to communicate the belief that *p*. This is not an impossible intention. I shall argue, however, that it is deviant and that consequently (TEF) fails to provide a satisfactory account of testimony.

If (TEF) were a correct account, then we should be able to find any number of perfectly standard cases in which the speaker believes that *p* and wishes to communicate this belief to an audience. Let us be very clear what this means. It is not that the speaker wishes to communicate to the audience *that he has this belief.* That interpretation would make (TEF) virtually indistinguishable from the account by Hugh Mellor, quoted on p. 305. In general there is no problem about a speaker communicating to an audience that he has a certain belief. All he has to do is tell them that he believes that *p*; but this is not to (aim to) communicate the belief that *p* by telling them *that p*, it is to (aim to) communicate the knowledge that he believes that *p* by telling them *that*

he believes that *p*. We want a case where a speaker, believing that *p*, tells his audience that *p* with the intention of bringing it to pass that the audience also believes that *p*. Consider the case of a professor who strongly hunches that *p*; he is aware that there is no real evidence for it, that it is no more than a hunch; but the hunch is powerful. He decides that, although it is not something what he is strictly entitled to teach, his students will be better off if the belief that *p* is added to the set of their beliefs. So he tells them that *p* and they duly record it in their notes alongside the genuine facts he has also communicated to them. This is plainly an abuse of the institution of telling or teaching.

How can this abuse be successful? It is surely necessary that what is abused (the institution of telling) should be capable of communicating *something*; beliefs as such, however, are not fit objects for normal communication. Suppose that the audience is convinced of the professor's sincerity; they will then believe *that he believes that p*. But I can believe that you believe that *p* without believing that *p* myself; I might think you were deluded, credulous, plain silly. On the other hand, it is plausible to say that I could not believe *that you know that p* and not think I know it too. So a hearer who accepts that a speaker is speaking from knowledge in the complete sense, i.e., both knowing that *p* and performing a speech-act of the right sort for communicating knowledge, thereby admits *that p* into the body of things he knows. You cannot believe that *a* knows that *p* and not think you also know that *p*. This has been denied, by Hintikka[7] for instance, but only, I submit, because he was antecedently committed to a theory which required it to be false, and not without having to elaborate a special doctrine to account for our strong intuitions about transmissibility. I say our concept of knowledge, unlike our concept of belief, is a concept of something which is *essentially* transmissible.

(TMW) captures our ordinary intuitions about telling, or so I claim. (TEF) on the other hand fails. It attributes a deviant intention to the speaker, and an intention, moreover, which is only available to the speaker in so far as he already understands about communicating knowledge. The trick is, so to speak, to slip his belief through under the guise of knowledge.

It does not follow that a process of testimony cannot be described with the uncommitted detachment to which (TEF) perhaps aspires. Merely, it cannot be done by (TEF) or any other belief-centred surrogate for (TMW). But a would-be uncommitted speaker does not necessarily

commit himself by attributing to someone the *intention* of letting his audience know that *p*. I can recognise this intention in medieval astronomy teachers though I am strongly committed to a non-geocentric astronomy. For the rest, the uncommitted observer can attribute to the participants in the process the *belief* that they know. Thus, in slightly different circumstances it might be that our professor, thinking that he knew that *p*, told his students that *p* with the intention that they might thereby come to know it. And they, by virtue of believing their professor, did suppose that they obtained that knowledge.

I conclude that accounts of testimony developed exclusively in terms of beliefs are mistaken. The concept of knowledge must feature essentially and irreducibly in the account. The processes of testimony are *dominated* by the idea of knowledge. Our concept of knowledge, but not our concept of belief, is essentially a concept of something transmissible or *commonable* through say-so. Finally, this notion of (commonable) knowledge underpins not only the language-game of telling the facts, but also the game of enquiry, seeking the facts.

4

In a sense that is the end of the matter. If I am right, knowledge possesses a certain property which belief lacks; this is the property of being commonable, a property essentially bound to the practices of telling and of enquiry, which are dominated by the idea of knowledge.

There is a residual problem, however, which deserves attention. In many cases where a speaker tells a hearer something, both speaker and hearer will, in the outcome, know that *p* and also believe that *p*. Moreover, given the set-up, it is no accident that they believe that *p*. How, then, are their beliefs and their knowledge related? Here is one suggestion.[8]

We begin by noticing that the knowledge and the belief may be ascribed to them in the same terms. We say, perhaps, that they believe *that the cat is on the mat*, and also that they know *that the cat is on the mat*. But for this coincidence of phrase there would have been no question of trying to explicate the knowledge in terms of belief; given the coincidence it is perhaps rather natural to look for a belief-theoretical account of what it is to know. But although we use the same words in ascribing the knowledge and the beliefs it does not follow that those words perform the same function in these two contexts. Following

Vendler, I suggest that they do not. Note, to begin with, that where we say someone knows *that the cat is on the mat* we should also be prepared to say that that person knows *where the cat is, what is on the mat, whether or not the cat is on the mat.* These are different ways of ascribing knowledge of the same thing to the same subject. They are not equivalent, of course; some may be available to some speakers but not to others. The 'know-that' mode of ascription, for example is only available to a speaker who himself (as be believes) possesses the knowledge. The 'know-*wh*' modes are valuable because they enable speakers who are themselves ignorant of the fact of the matter to tell others how the knowledge is distributed, where it may be found.

There are no parallels for this on the side of belief: '*a* believes where the cat is' is not intelligible English. As it happens 'a believes what is on the mat' is intelligible, but it is not a possible inference from '*a* believes that the cat is on the mat'; if what is on the mat is a cat, then *a*, in believing what is on the mat, believes *the cat* – in this case, one must suppose, a talking cat! When it follows *believe*, the phrase 'what is on the mat' cannot introduce an indirect question; in this context the 'what' is relative and means 'that which'. But when the phrase follows *know* it is used to introduce an indirect question. The subject who knows what is on the mat knows the answer to that question. That is what it is to know *what is on the mat.*

The words which admit these interrogative substitutions in some contexts but not in others perform different roles in these different contexts. For present purposes that is the crucial point, and we need not be too concerned with delineating these different roles. Let us say, in Vendler's style, that in the *know*-context they refer to a fact, whereas in the *believe*-context they introduce a proposition – that is, something which may be assessed as either true or false; the former context is *factive* and the latter *non-factive.* This means, *inter alia*, that a speaker, ascribing the knowledge that *p* to a subject, is thereby committed to the 'factiveness' of what he ascribes; but one who ascribes a belief enters into no factive commitment. If you say, 'John knows that the cat is on the mat' you should be prepared to say you know it, too, since you are treating it as a matter of fact of which you are, by virtue of being able to spell it out, fully apprised. But if you affirm that John believes that the cat is on the mat, there is no requirement that you also should believe it; that he believes the propositon to be true is in itself no reason why you should.

Here, then, is a solution to the problem I posed at the beginning of this section. Imagine someone who, like the participants in the process of testimonial transmission, has the words 'the cat is on the mat', or some mental surrogate for those words, in mind. The words in themselves, written or spoken, do not determine how they are to be taken; they are not, so to speak, marked *factive* or *non-factive*; they can be either. But just as one context ('*know-* . . . ', but also the language-game of telling) unequivocally assigns them a factive role and a different context ('*believe-* . . . ', and also the language games of opining, guessing etc.) a non-factive role, so a given mode of mental entertainment (that of one who takes himself to be a knower) determines a factive role for them or their mental surrogates, while a different mode of entertainment (that of a believer) determines a non-factive role for them or their mental surrogates. Since the words function quite differently in these contexts there can be no question of explicating '*a* knows that the cat is on the mat' as '*a* believes correctly that the cat is on the mat and . . . '. Still, someone who holds 'the cat is on the mat' factively takes the words as stating a fact and should, therefore be prepared to affirm the proposition which they may also express. Hence, it is no accident that knowers are generally believers. The converse does not hold. And it can happen that someone who has these words or a mental surrogate in mind may be unsure whether to present themselves as knowing and prepared to play the factive game by telling others, or whether to restrict themselves to the role of believer. The epistemology of testimony should be about the considerations which weigh with a rational subject when making decisions of this sort and, in the case of a hearer of testimony, weigh with them in deciding whether to believe a speaker. It is an investigation which may turn out to have more of an ethical than a conceptual analytical cast.

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NOTES

[1] I first coined this word to capture this feature of the logic of the concept of knowledge in 'Knowing and Believing' *Philosophy* (55) 1980.

[2] Colin Radford, 'Knowledge – by Examples', *Analysis* 1966.

[3] Michael Welbourne, *The Community of Knowledge*, Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press, 1986; also Atlantic Highlands N.J., Humanities Press 1986.

[4] These include, amongst others, Austin ('Other Minds', in his *Philosophical Papers*, Oxford, 1961) and Vendler (*Res Coqitans* chapter V, Ithaca and London, 1972).
[5] The view is developed in 'Utterer's Meaning, Sentence-Meaning and Word-Meaning' (reprinted in J.R. Searle (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*, Oxford University Press, 1971). See also Strawson, 'Meaning and Truth' in his *Logico-Linguistic Papers* 181.
[6] It is thoughts like this which provide Edward Craig with his *point d'appui* in 'The Practical Explication of Knowledge', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1987. These thoughts are further developed in his *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis*, Clarendon Press, 1990.
[7] In *Knowledge and Belief* (Ithaca and London 1962) 63.
[8] It will be evident that the suggestion owes something to Zeno Vendler. See, for example, 'Telling the Facts' in French, Peter A., Ueling, Theodore E. and Wettstein, Howard, K. (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language* (University of Minnesota, 1979). J. J. MacIntosh, has also argued cogently to the same effect in 'Knowing and Believing', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1980.

B. SHUKLA†

ON PROPOSITIONS: A NAIYĀYIKA RESPONSE TO RUSSELLIAN THEORY

[The present essay is a translation of a Sanskrit paper written by one of the greatest exponents of the Nyāya tradition (both *old* and *New* Nyāya) of our times who died in 1987. He tries to summarize some of the controversies and comparisons discussed during a conference in July 1983, at Pune (India) where Russell's and Moore's views about 'propositions' were explained in Sanskrit to traditional Sanskrit-speaking philosophers who are otherwise unexposed to Western philosophy].

Every means of knowledge first generates in us an awareness of a judgeable content. Afterwards if the cogniser finds or obtains a corresponding (configuration of) object(s) then he ascertains the truth of this content. In other cases, he recognises it to have been false. Take the case of perceptual awareness. Sometimes a man fails to identify a piece of tin correctly and takes it to be silver; on other occasions he does actually correctly perceive silver to be so. In both cases he initially judges: 'I have seen silver'. But then, because in the first case of observation there actually *is no* silver, he comes to recognise the untruth of what was cognised. Since there *is* silver in the second sort of cases of observation, what was cognised earlier is later ascertained to be true.

Take, now, the case of awareness generated by others' words: when from the sentence 'Caitra is watering the field with fire' someone grasps (the literal meaning which is incoherent therefore false) that Caitra is the agent of the act of watering which has the field as its accusative and fire as its instrument, he then thinks 'I have understood the purport of that sentence.' Analogously, when from the sentence 'Maitra is watering the garden with water' one comes to grasp that Maitra is the agent of that act of watering which has the garden as its accusative and water as its instrument, then also one considers oneself to have understood the meaning of the mentioned sentence. The meaning or entity which appears to have been known as understood from either of those two sentences is an additional entity called a *proposition*. Due to the absence, in the world outside, of any actual circumstances answering to that which is gathered from the first sentence, the falsity (or fictionality) of what is grasped from it is ascertained.

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 315–324.

The same situation arises in philosophical debates when in order to settle which of two mutually contradictory properties belongs to a certain object, a proponent and an opponent employ two different sentences designed to put forward their respective views. An instance of this would be a typical metaphysical controversy between the Mīmāṃsā and the Nyāya philosophers. (The) M(īmāṃsaka) utters the sentence 'Sound is eternal.' (The) N(aiyāyika)[1] utters the sentence 'Sound is noneternal.' From M's utterance, N cannot possibly have an awareness of sound as eternal because N has already got the opposite conviction that sound is noneternal. Similarly, from the utterance of N too, M cannot come to have an awareness of sound as noneternal because he is already firmly convinced that sound is eternal. Thus it remains unintelligible how either of them can be impelled to refute the contention of the other (because one does not even know what the other one has meant by his utterance). It is because of this difficulty that the followers of Russell[2] would hold the following kind of view.

On hearing, successively, those two sentences one could come to apprehend, respectively, a *proposition* which is distinct from both the properties of being a sound and being eternal (i.e. *that sound is eternal* and another *proposition* (*that sound is noneternal*), which, again, is distinct from the individual properties of being a sound and being noneternal. Since awareness of *a* as *f* can only be prevented or blocked by a (pre-existing) awareness of *a* itself as *non-f*, but not by awareness of something other than *a*, awareness of a *proposition* (as being put forward by M) will not be prevented or blocked by N's pre-established certitude about *sound* as noneternal (because the qualificand or subject-term of the alleged awareness about to arise and that of the possible preventor-awareness will be *different*). Thus it becomes intelligible how both parties of a dispute can go on to support their respective contentions intended to be understood by the opponent from the two contradictory statements, and both of their defences can be parallelly strengthened by arguments and evidence.

It is only to this sort of entity called a *proposition* and to nothing else that *truth* can belong in virtue of the obtaining of corresponding actual circumstances. Without the admission of *propositions* a debate or philosophical controversy of the above sort would not be possible. That is the view of the learned upholders of the Russellian position.

Such a theory of proposition, as it was held at one time by Russell, might be found to have a parallel in the Grammarians' theory of objects

existing only in intellect, or in the Nondualists' (*Advaita*) theory of merely apparent entities, or in Vācaspati Miśra's peculiar theory of non-actual relations which are nevertheless *presented* in awareness. But actually none of these theories can be reduced to (or made to do the work of) Russell's theory of propositions.

Take the Grammarians' view first. Although the so-called 'intellectual object' does not exist in the material world, it does exist in the intellect (of the user of a word). But a Russellian proposition is something which exists neither physically outside nor occurs in the mind (it is not a mental entity), but is only made an (intended) *object* of understanding. Indeed, in Russell's view, there is no such separate subjective realm of intellect which houses all sorts of *meanings*.

The merely apparent or illusory objects of the Nondualist Vendāntins[3] are brought into being by individual pieces of (personal) delusive ignorance and go out of existence when those bits of ignorance perish. But what is meant by a '*proposition*' is not such. Whether true or false, a proposition is neither generated nor destroyed, but eternal. For, that is how Russell conceives of them.

The supposed proposition is also essentially distinct from the kind of relational tie which is immediately presented during perceptual illusion, according to another philosopher Vācaspati Miśra (9th c. A.D.). This is because it is not itself spurious or unreal (even if it is a false proposition) like that relational tie (indeed, the false proposition is as much real as the true one). The proposition which figures as the content of illusion merely fails to agree with facts or the external order of things but it is not itself a sheer nothing like the relational tie which, according to Vācaspati, constitutes the unreal link connecting real things and properties which appear erroneously connected in perceptual illusions.

However, the problems which the theory of propositions was supposed to solve can be handled from the perspective of Indian philosophy, especially from that of the Nyāya school in the following manner. In the context of perception it could be said that there is no good reason to admit two different types of entities (extensional) *things* and (intensional) *contents*. One could easily account for these two sorts of circumstances by simply admitting two different *states* of a simple set of ordinary (outer) objects.

The idea is this. The same object (or complex of objects qualified by properties and joined by relations) can undergo two successive states

(in relation to our awareness of it). One is the state of being *cognised* as the locus of a certain mode of presentation when the cognition is not yet established as *knowledge*. Another is the state of being (proved to have been) *known* as the locus of that very mode of presentation.[4] For example, whenever a man sees what actually is a piece of tin or a piece of real silver as silver (i.e., has a visual cognition of the form 'That is silver') he does not necessarily come to have accurate *knowledge* of the item being seen as the locus of silverness which is the mode of presentation.

In this initial state the object is not yet proved to have been *known* as the actual locus of the property through which it is presented. Subsequently, when the practical efforts which are generated by the (yet-unevaluated) awareness succeed, it becomes known that what was identified as silver was really the locus of silverness. This is the state of the very same object (the piece of silver, if the cognition turns out to be *knowledge*) which can be called the state of being an object of knowledge *qua* the locus of the relevant mode of presentation. Thus, it seems, the purpose served by Russell's category of propositions (facts etc.) can be served equally well by just these two states of ordinary things of the world (in relation to our epistemic position regarding them). There is no reasonable room left for the admission of two different kinds of entities.[5]

In the case of an awareness generated by words (in a sentence), the following could be said: N who is convinced of the noneternity of sound does not actually derive awareness of the sentence-meaning from M's use of the sentence 'Sound is eternal'. But he has an inferential awareness of the cognitive state of the utterer of that sentence. (N infers that M must have had a certain awareness of such and such a form which he is expressing through that string of words).

The speaker's belief in the truth of his utterance is a causal factor in generating the deliberate utterance of that sentence. Now, we can generally infer the cause from the effect. From the effect, in this case, M's employment of the words 'Sound' 'is' 'eternal' arranged in that sentential order, it is possible to infer the cause, in this case the prior awareness (in M) of the sentence's message (his awareness of sound as eternal). In other words, N infers not that sound is eternal but that M believes that sound is eternal. Similarly, even M who has ascertained sound to be eternal cannot possibly extract a word-generated knowledge of sound as non-eternal. But in the above fashion he can also have

an inferential awareness of N's awareness that must have prompted N to make such a statement.

But, insofar as an awareness is, as a rule, determined by its object, how can someone apprehend the awareness without somehow apprehending the object first? (Thus, can M cognise N's cognition of noneternal sound without first ascertaining sound to be noneternal?). Such an objection against the above account need not worry us. It is true that unless we are aware of a certain (complex, qualified) object, we can never be aware of a certain cognition as *qualified* by that object. Yet we can be aware of another piece of awareness (our own or someone else's) without committing ourselves to the actuality of its object, by qualifying the awareness not directly by the object but by the cognitive roles of qualificands, qualifiers, relational ties etc.[6]

From M's utterance N can, in this manner, have an awareness of M's cognition which is characterised (not by the already-cemented contentual qualification: the property of being about eternal sound but) by the property of having sound as its qualificand and eternity as its qualifier.[7] Analogously, M can have, from N's utterance, a cognition of the awareness arising in N not as the awareness of noneternal sound but as the awareness which has sound in the role of the qualificand and noneternity in the role of the qualifier. (Their respective commitments would not stand in the way of such grasping of a loosened up picture of what the other person is aware of.)

Of course, one may wish to avoid the above account of the hearer's inferential derivation of the speaker's awareness because it is unnecessarily strained and cumbersome. An alternative – perhaps more natural – theory can then be proposed.

The speaker does not always wish to communicate (in the sense of making the audience know) the meaning of the sentence he uses. Only when the meaning of the sentence is such that it is not incompatible with what the hearer firmly believes, the speaker wishes to make him believe directly in what the sentence says. When the message of the sentence happens to be manifestly incompatible with the hearer's beliefs, the speaker cannot possibly want to generate awareness of his own sentence-meaning in the hearer because the latter will fail to extract a connected whole meaning out of the different bits of the sentence (his own certainty to the contrary will stand in the way). In such cases, it is the speaker's own *awareness* of the meaning of his own sentence that he tries to communicate to the hearer. A distinction has to be drawn

between communicating the meant content and conveying the speaker's awareness of the meant content. Thus, to go back to our example, behind M's utterance may lie the special semantic intention: "Let this sentence of mine, viz. 'Sound is eternal' make my interlocutor cognise my own cognition that sound is eternal". From that utterance, due to such a specially laid down semantic rule the hearer has a verbal awareness of the (speaker's) awareness of that sentence meaning.[8]

If it seems hard to accept that such a special rule about sentence-meaning should be learnable by the listener just on the occasion of understanding that particular utterance, we could easily offer the following, yet another, alternative account.

When N, who knows sound to be noneternal, hears M's utterance of the sentence "Sound is eternal", he has an imaginative (i.e., deliberately counterfactual) inner awareness (called a "mock-cognition") of eternity as belonging to sound. Such an imaginative supposal is made by him because the constituent words of that sentence successively arouse in him the memories of the meant entities, and the entities are then directly apprehended in that order as in the case of a memory-mediated perception.[9] Of course, this distinctive sort of mock-cognition (of the above form) happens in spite of the subject's conviction to the contrary only by the force of his desire to take things that way.

Against our theory, however, one could object that such a mock awareness or supposal should not be admitted because, in this case, N has no desire to take sound as eternal. This objection is easy to meet. During a philosophical debate each participant *does* wish to generate in himself some awareness of the meaning of his challenger's utterance (even if that meaning is contrary to his own firm belief) just for fear of incurring the technical *case of defeat*[10] called "incomprehension". If in the above sort of cases, when someone knows an object to be of a certain kind, yet can have a noncommittal awareness of it in the completely opposite way, it is possible to give an account of such awareness in the above fashion then the admission of propositions as extra entities no longer seems reasonable. But followers of Russell have thought about this matter also in another way.

When someone says "I believe that the earth is round" it is not the *sentence* which follows the word "that" (viz. "the earth is round") which is understood as the object of the speaker's belief but the meaning of the sentence which is so understood. Of course, it is not the actual roundness of the earth which is ascertained by the hearer when he grasps the

meaning of that embedded bit. So we must admit something in between the sentence and the roundness of the earth in the world. It is as a proposition-sort of entity that we have to construe the *earth's being round* in such indirect belief-reporting contexts. Afterwards, of course, if the actual roundness of the earth is established by some other means of knowledge then the *truth* of that (believed) sentence is ensured (but before that it is understood only as the proposition that someone else believes in). Similarly if someone says "I doubt whether it will rain tomorrow", it is not the string of words following "whether" which figures as the object of doubt, but it is the likelihood of rain on the next day that is taken to be the object of the speaker's doubt. It is only as a *proposition* that the matter (of it raining the next day) can become a content of doubt, because the actual fact of rain the next day could not yet be available to be compared with these words. If it actually does rain next day then the truth of what was suspected or doubtfully anticipated on the previous day is borne out; if it does not then the doubted content is recognised to have been false. (Thus propositional contents become inescapable).

On this point, the following rejoinder should be appropriate. When the above (belief-ascribing) utterance is issued, it is the actual roundness of the earth which is grasped as the speaker's object of belief (there are not two distinct roundnesses – one in the earth and one in the speaker's mind. The speaker had in mind the same roundness which the earth's surface exemplifies). Only, at that stage, before the hearer bothers to verify the speaker's belief, there is still scope for the hearer to cast doubt on what is reported only as the object of someone else's belief. When by some other proof or evidence the believed matter is established (as definitely true or false) such scope of doubt or wonderment does not remain. The same line of explanation can be easily extended to sentences introducing something as an object of doubt or uncertainty as well. Since it is possible, in this manner, to sort out the issue, the postulation of a separate kind of entity called "proposition" is groundless.

Synonymous sentences are also cited as grounds for justifying the admission of *propositions* into our ontology by the followers of Russell. For example, take the English sentence "Caitra is clever", the Hindi sentence "Caitra buddhimān hai", the Sanskrit sentence "Caitra ścaturo'-sti". Although these sentences differ in physical form (sound or shape) they have the identical meaning.

All of them speak of the same meant entity, namely a certain Caitra who is qualified by intelligence. If such a Caitra is found in the world then this meaning is found to be true, otherwise it is found to be false. From this it seems to be clear that the meaning conveyed by all these sentences is something during our initial grasp of which we have to wait for checking its correspondence or lack of correspondence with what we come across in the external world, in order that we can assess whether it is true or false. Such a situation (that we understand the common meaning of several synonymous sentences without any idea as to whether what the sentence means is true or false) can be accounted for only if we construe the meaning expressed by all those sentences as a *proposition*.

Even this argument, however, cannot succeed to establish the existence of propositions as something distinct from actual objects of the world (including *words*). Even here one could say that when we understand those synonymous sentences the meaning that we grasp as conveyed by all of them is of the nature of actual objects of the world. It is only that until we have come to apprehend those meant objects definitely as existing in the world, their objectivity is not *ascertained*. When we cognise objects (along with qualities and relations) – not necessarily as that is how things actually stand – there is one primary state of them (vis-a-vis our epistemic state) which is the state of being not-known-as-objectively-real (but only purported by words or presented otherwise to consciousness). Subsequently, when what the sentence meant is actually found to be the case then those very objects (and properties etc.) are ascertained to be actually so. This is their second state of being proved to have been known as they are. Since one can manage to explain the two ways in which the same meaning of different sentences can figure (before and after its truth-evaluation) just with those two *phases* of the same set of objects, the positing of a separate sort of *realities* called *propositions* on top of objective constituents of the world is indeed unreasonable.

When we are finally setting out how the real order of things stands, we should admit that there are words which are of the nature of groups of articulated letter sounds, there are the individual meanings of them (objects, actions, qualities, universals, relations etc.), then there are sentences which are made up of those words and, finally, there are sentence-meanings which are made up of these very meant entities. But apart from all these, if Russell[11] urges us to admit a new sort of item

distinct from the furniture of the world – items which we convey or express by our sentences especially when the hearer does not yet know whether what the sentence says agrees with facts or not, such a theory does not deserve to go unattacked.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

[1] '*Naiyāyika* is the Sanskrit adjective derived from the word 'Nyāya'. It means: of or pertaining to the *Nyāya* school of classical Indian philosophy. It can also mean *an adherent* of that school.

[2] In this part, the author must have been (mis)led by his informants – those who summarised Russell's views for him – to construe Russell's distinction between *proposition* and *objects* in the light of his early (*Principles of Mathematics*) distinction between *BEING* and *EXISTENCE*, or even perhaps in terms of the Meinongian distinction between *SUBSISTENCE* and *EXISTENCE*. Indeed, the conception ascribed to Russell in this paper is more akin to Frege's notion of "Thoughts" than to what is nowadays standardly known as Russellian propositions (which is more like early Wittgenstein's *state of affairs* where objects can directly figure as constituents).

[3] The conjecture that the so-called "seeming objects" of Advaita philosophy might be ontologically similar to Russell's propositions might have sprung from the Advaita doctrine that mere appearances are neither real nor absolutely unreal. *Contents* or *Meanings* being intensional entities which are neither *sheer* nothing nor externally real existents – might have struck the traditional Indian philosopher to be something of the sort. Of course, the analogy is ill-founded and that is what the author goes on to expose.

[4] By "*jñāyamāna rūpa*" or "the way/mode in which it is presented in this context" is meant the property etc. by which the object of cognition is identified. If, e.g., we perceive or otherwise apprehend an object as red then the *red colour* is the mode of presentation.

[5] The proposed view here is an improvement on basic Nyāya Epistemological tenets. But it is quite characteristically an original idea of Badrinath Shukla's. Nyāya has traditionally rejected the identification of knowledge with knowledge of knowledge. To use contemporary jargon, Nyāya is out and out *externalistic* about justification: knowledge, for them, need not carry awareness of its own knowledge*hood* with it. The piece of awareness which grasps the object (correctly or incorrectly) and the piece of awareness which grasps this awareness must be distinguished. And it follows that our awareness of the *knowledgehood* of a certain other piece of awareness must also be distinguished from the latter – the original piece of knowledge. From this, Shukla draws his own conclusion that when my cognition of A is itself ascertained as *knowledge* then a new property or state is undergone by A, namely the property of being the object of an aware-

ness which is verified to be knowledge. This *might* sound somewhat like the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā doctrine that by "apprehendedness" (*Jnātatā) – although here the property will be the more complicatged and richer property of "being the object of an apprehension which in its turn has been established to be knowledge." One could object that admission of such an emergent state* of the object goes against the grain of the basic Nyāya *realism*. Surely, to cognise is not to be sure that one's cognition has hit the mark of truth and knowledgehood. But my knowledge of the knowledgehood of a certain initial awareness of an object should not make any difference to the object. But perhaps Shukla would respond that the difference made to the object is only a *Cambridge-change*!

[6] The general idea is this – instead of H claiming to know S's cognition of a blue rose which commits H to the existence of the blue rose which S has cognised, H could claim to know that S has had a cognition of which the role of qualificand is assumed by a rose and the role of the qualifier is assumed by the colour blue etc.

[7] Qualificand-ness and Qualifier-ness are different species of content-ness (*viṣayatā* – cognition-related properties or roles assumed by actual objects, properties and relations as we are aware of them. When a is qualified by b, Matilal recommends the symbolisation "Q(a,b)" – for the complex object. The content of N's awareness, here, would take the form:

Q(M,Q (awareness,Q (Q(Qualificandness, sound),
Q(Qualifierness, Eternity))))

[8] It might seem unclear what problem exactly is bothering the author here. Why can't I *understand* the sentence "A is F" if I already believe that A is not F? Since from the Nyāya point of view grasp of meaning cannot be wholly devoid of belief, without a minimal acceptance (– even if with a shade of doubt) of the facthood of the content we cannot take it as meant by a sentence. So if, while I am convinced that sound is noneternal, I cannot apprehend that *sound is eternal* as a propositional meaning of a certain sentence, I can at best apprehend that this speaker believes that sound is eternal.

[9] The special mode of perception appealed to here is called perception by "Jnāna Lakṣaṇā Pratyāsatti". The standard example is a *visual* perception of a piece of sandalwood as sweet-*smelling*.

[10] In the Nyāya rules of philosophical dialogue, a series of twenty-two "cases of defeat" are listed, of which failing to grasp the meaning of the opponents' argument or assertion or word is one. It is called "Apratibhā".

[11] Russell in his *Problem of Philosophy* himself gives us a theory of truth and falsehood which dispenses with special propositions like *contents* on top of individual things and relations which our beliefs are ultimately *about*. But the above exercise is interesting in its own right as a traditional Indian philosopher's critical appreciation of the idea of such a Fregean – (thought – sort of) content. This is especially important now, because Fregean thoughts and contents seem to be coming back on the scene. Thus, even if the theory that Badrinath Shukla attacks is not actually Russellian, his manoeuvres remain intriguing.

VISVABANDHU BHATTACHARYA

PROPER NAMES AND INDIVIDUALS

I wish to discuss the problems connected with proper names, i.e. the names that we give to individuals in order to designate them. I shall discuss the views of the Indian philosophers in this regard; in fact I shall follow the Nyāya school. Before I deal with proper names, however, I must discuss some general problems connected with words or linguistic utterances and their role in generating knowledge.

Of various means of acquiring knowledge, testimony is one and perhaps the dominant one. For knowledge acquired by testimony is more pervasive than knowledge acquired by other means. Through word we acquire knowledge of things not only remote in space and time but also near but imperceptible. It is through testimony that human beings acquire knowledge from their predecessors and use that knowledge to act on and control their environment. Through testimony a person acquires knowledge about past events and uses it to formulate future plans. Having heard an utterance, the hearer comes to know the fact expressed by it, and the speaker thus transmits knowledge to others.

Utterances usually are noises or sounds, but not every noise generates testimony-based knowledge in the hearer. For example, the sound made by a conch-shell or from beating drums or the noises made by birds, though they may indicate something, would not generate testimony-based knowledge. Testimony-based knowledge is generated from such utterances as 'Bring a pot' and 'There is a cow'. Words or utterances which produce testimony-based knowledge are called 'meaningful utterances' (*sārthaka-śabda*). Uttered words present their objects to the hearer, and in combination with other uttered words they generate testimony-based knowledge. Several meaningful words constitute a sentence when they are connected in a particular manner. A collection of uttered words which are meaningful and constitute a sentence in this way, having presented the objects to the hearer, produce testimony-based knowledge which grasps the objects as a connected whole.

A particular meaningful word presents a particular object. For example, the word 'cow' presents an animal of a particular kind, possessing dewlap etc. It cannot present any other kind of animal, such

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 325–346.

as a horse or a buffalo. Presentation of an object in memory is governed by a rule, which can be stated thus: 'cognition of one of two related objects will present the other object that is related to it'. Therefore, if one knows the relation of the word with the object, one will remember that object when one hears the word. A word cannot present an object that is not related to it. If it could then from any word we would remember any odd object, but that does not happen. Therefore, a particular word, having been related to a particular object, presents that object. This relation of word with object – the relation that is responsible for generating testimony-based knowledge – is of two types. One is the designative relation (*śakti*), the other is the indicatory or (metaphorically mediated) relation (*lakṣaṇā*).

The designative relation belonging to a word is actually the capacity or power of the word to generate a cognition of an object. Now there are various views about the nature of this designative power. The Naiyāyikas call it a kind of convention (*saṇketa*). On the Nyāya view, this convention is nothing but a decree or intention (icchā) of the type: 'From such-and-such word, such-and-such object should be known'. Certain words, such as 'cow', 'pot', etc., are eternally current in the language. With regard to such words we have to take the decree to be undatable (*anādi*). We cannot ascertain the time when such words were introduced in the language, the date from which people began cognising the corresponding objects from the utterances of them. For this reason, these words and the practice of cognising objects from them would have to be regarded as dateless, and in the same way the relation between such words and their objects would have to be admitted as dateless. On the Nyāya view, both God and his decree are accepted as eternal. Therefore the Naiyāyikas contend that the designative relation of such words is nothing but a decree of God. There are also certain words which do have a beginning, for example when parents name their child as Rāma or Śyāma.

Previous usages of a word would be our evidence (*pramāṇa*) in determining the designative power of that word with regard to that object. If the word x has been used for a long time in the past to convey knowledge of an object y, then that y is the designatum of the word x. For example, words such as 'cow' and 'pot' are used to convey knowledge of a cow or of a pot, and so it is admitted that such words have a designative power with respect to such objects.

When we hear the word 'cow', three items are presented in our minds,

namely a universal, cowhood, the appearance (*ākṛti*) of a particular cow and an individual cow (*vyakti*). In this way, when we have a testimony-based knowledge generated by words like 'cow', these three items will be grasped. Therefore the Naiyāyikas say that all these three constitute the designatum (*padārtha*) of the word. On this matter, Akṣapāda Gautama has said in the Nyāya-Sutras that 'The designatum of a word is constituted by the universal, the appearance and the individual'.

One may object as follows. In such sentences as 'The cow moves' or 'The cow stands', the word 'cow' generates knowledge only of the individual cow. For neither an appearance nor a universal can be connected with the activity of moving, since motion does not belong to such entities. Only an entity such as the individual cow can be connected with the activity of moving. Therefore only the individual is the designatum of the word 'cow'.

The Naiyāyikas reply as follows. When one utters the word 'cow', a cow is presented in the mind as distinguished from buffalos or horses. This is called the 'distinguishing cognition' (*vyāvṛtti-buddhi*). Besides, the individual cow is presented to the mind also as characterised by cowhood. This is called the 'unifying cognition' (*anugata-buddhi*). Since from the utterance of the word 'cow', a cognition arises of the cow as distinguished from non-cows as well as belonging to the cow-kind, the cognition must also grasp such a property which will both identify the cow as a member of its kind and exclude it from non-cows. For example, consider the cognition expressed as 'The floor has a pot on it'. This cognition excludes the floor from such entities on which no pot is present, as well as identifying it as a member of the set of floors in which there is a pot. Therefore that cognition must have as one of its objects a property that would (a) differentiate the floor from all such floors where a pot is not present, and (b) identify the floor as one where a pot is present. A property is called a *unifying* property when it helps us to cognise a number of individuals as belonging to a kind or sort, and a property is called a *differentiating* property if it helps us to cognise the object as distinct from other kinds of object. There are certain properties, e.g. cowhood or pothood, which perform both functions. Further there are certain properties which can perform the function of sorting only, not of excluding, e.g. knowability or designatability, since according to Nyāya there are no unknowable or undesignatable objects. There are certain properties, moreover, which only distinguish, e.g. skyhood, since

the sky is unique. When individuals are grasped by our cognition as distinct from others as well as belonging to a sort, then the property that performs this double function[1] is grasped by that cognition. Cowhood is such a property. Therefore the designatum of the word 'cow' cannot be simply the individual cow without cowhood.

One may raise the following objection. If it becomes necessary to accept cowhood as part of the designatum of the word 'cow', then let that cowhood alone be the designatum of 'cow'. What is the use of admitting the individual cow as part of that designatum? In testimony-based knowledge generated by the word 'cow', cognition of cowhood is predominant, because cowhood appears there as the qualifier of an individual cow. The general dictum is this: 'If the qualifier is not known or cognised, then it cannot appear as qualifying the qualificand in the content of a qualificative cognition'. In view of this rule we must have a cognition of cowhood first, prior to the testimony-based knowledge generated by the word 'cow'. The word 'cow' generates this primary cognition of cowhood.

One may further contend that the word, i.e. a common noun, presents first the universal and presents the individual only afterwards. Therefore it is not proper to say that an individual is also part of the designatum of the word. For if a word presents a certain object first, then the purpose of that word has already been served. It becomes powerless to generate testimony-based knowledge by presenting another object in the second place. Therefore it is concluded that a word does not present the individual; it presents the universal.

There is another argument in favour of this view. If the designatum of the word 'cow' is the individual cow, then since there are innumerable cows, we have to admit that there are countless powers between the word and an object. If cowhood is the designatum, then there is only one power, for the universal is unique. Therefore cowhood is the designatum of the word 'cow'. On this view, the individual cow is also grasped by the relevant testimony-based knowledge, for if it is not admitted that testimony-based knowledge, grasps an individual, then the view becomes counter-intuitive. For everybody will admit that when a word is uttered, and testimony-based knowledge is generated, the individual cow is also grasped thereby. This is because we cannot say that the universal cowhood moves or can be fetched as would otherwise have to be the case to derive testimony-based knowledge from utterances such as 'The cow moves', 'Bring the cow'.

In view of this, the Universalists, those who claim that the designative power of a word hooks it up to a universal, are constrained to accept that, in testimony-based knowledge, the individual is connected with such activity as moving and being fetched. Therefore on this view, the universal cowhood itself, having been presented by the word, would drag in an individual in so far as the individual is connected with such a universal, and thereby allow testimony-based knowledge to grasp the individual. In this way, on this view the individual also appears in the content of the resulting knowledge.

The Naiyāyikas put forward a number of arguments in order to refute this view of the Universalists. We shall introduce briefly a couple of such arguments. We have seen that the Universalists admit that the individual cow is also grasped by testimony-based knowledge generated by the word 'cow'. However we may ask here how this is done. In other words, what evidence can we cite to show that the individual is grasped in testimony-based knowledge? Now, an object cannot be known without there being an instrumental cause of its presentation in the knowledge. Therefore we have to admit some instrumental cause that would regulate the grasping of the individual in such knowledge. If it is said in reply that the utterance of the word 'cow' itself is such an instrumental cause, then we have to say the presentation of the object by a word is dependent upon our cognition of the word-object relation, and that knowledge of the object is facilitated by such a presentation.

If an object is presented by the word through the word-object relation, then that very object is grasped by testimony-based knowledge. If an object is presented through any *other* means we cannot take it to be grasped in testimony-based knowledge. For when one hears the word 'pot' one may *remember* the sky, and on the basis of such a presentation some may claim that the sky may also be grasped by testimony-based knowledge generated by the word 'pot'. For the rule that governs the presentation by remembrance is this: 'If the relation between two items is known, and one of these items is cognised, then it will generate remembrance of the other item'. The word 'pot' is a word that is uttered and such an utterance, being a noise, would be related to the sky by the relation of inherence, since, according to the Nyāya ontological scheme, sky (*ākāśa*) is the substratum of sound. In other words, there is a relation between such a noise and the sky. Therefore it is possible to remember the sky when one hears the word 'pot'. If the sky is remembered in this way, then some might make the absurd claim that

the sky is grasped in that testimony-based knowledge which is generated by the utterance of such a sentence as 'Bring a pot'. However nobody supports such an absurd claim. Therefore, if an object is grasped by testimony-based knowledge, such an object must be connected with the relevant word through the standard word-object relation. When a word is related to an object by the word-object relation, which is either the designative function or the indicative function, then that object is called the designatum of the word. Therefore if the word-object relation is admitted with respect to the individual cow then that individual will constitute the designatum of the word.

The Universalist might argue in reply as follows. From such sentences as 'Bring a cow', the designatum of the word 'cow', i.e. cowhood, is first connected with the activity of bringing. It may seem to us that cowhood cannot be connected with the activity of bringing, because what is brought is not cowhood but an individual cow. However, we *can* establish a relation between cowhood and the activity of bringing, for cowhood is connected with bringing by a chain (*paramparā*) relation, namely connectedness-with-its-own-substratum. In other words, x is related by such a chain-relation to y if and only if x is connected with the substratum of y. By such a chain relation cowhood as the designatum of the word 'cow' can be connected with the activity of bringing. Therefore the primary knowledge that arises from the sentence 'Bring a cow' is this: bring something that is qualified by cowhood. There can be an inference which will generate the cognition that the command is to bring an individual cow. Thus on the Universalist view, the activity of bringing can be connected in this way with the designatum of the word 'cow', viz. cowhood, through the substratum of cowhood, the individual cow.

In reply the Naiyāyikas point out the following. When something is inferred, there an experience is immediately generated in the form 'I infer such-and-such' or 'Such-and-such is being inferred'. This experience or reflexive awareness (*anuvyavasāya*) in such cases cannot be of the form 'I hear such-and-such' or 'Such-and-such is being heard'. However, nobody experiences a reflexive awareness of the form 'I infer that a cow is to be brought' following the knowledge generated by an utterance of the sentence 'Bring a cow'. Therefore such an inference is not possible.

The other reply from the Naiyāyikas can be stated as follows. In testimony-based knowledge, the designatum of one word is connected with the designatum of another – this is the rule. When somebody utters 'cows', technically there are two meaning-bearing elements 'cow' and

the plural suffix '-s'. Nyāya defines a word as a meaning-bearing element. So according to Nyāya these two elements will be called *words*. The designatum of '-s' is plurality, and if the designatum of 'cow' is the universal cowhood, then the two designata – plurality and cowhood – cannot be connected, for there cannot be more than one cowhood. One cannot say that plurality could be connected with the individual cows, because an individual cow is not the designatum of the word 'cow'. In this way, the Nyāya says, on the view of the Universalist the designata of certain affixes, such as duality and plurality, would not be connected with the universal meant by the term to which these affixes are added.

Therefore testimony-based knowledge derived from an utterance comprising the word 'cow' cannot grasp simply the universal cowhood. Testimony-based knowledge grasps an individual cow qualified by cowhood, so this is the designatum of the word 'cow'. Similarly, when the word 'cow' is uttered, we are also presented with a kind of appearance or configuration (*ākṛti*). That configuration is also grasped in testimony-based knowledge, and therefore also partly constitutes the designatum of the word. In other words, since the word 'cow' has the capacity to generate a cognition of all the three, cowhood, the cow-appearance, and the individual cow, all three comprise the designatum of the word. However, they do not do so independently of each other. The universal and the appearance are revealed by the word as *qualifiers* of the individual: the designatum of the word is the individual qualified by the universal and the appearance. Viśvanātha has said 'The power of a word rests with the individual as qualified by the universal and the appearance' in his *Siddhāntamuktāvalī*.

The universal is revealed in testimony-based knowledge as the qualifier of the individual, and it is the unifying property of all such individuals. For this reason, the universal is called the *limitor* of the property of being the designatum of that word, or the limitor of designatum-hood. However, although the appearance is also taken to be a qualifier it cannot be such a limitor, for an appearance is nothing but a special configuration of different parts of limbs, the particular arrangement or interconnection of the parts of the cow such as its head, tail and dewlap. Such an appearance is unique to each cow, and so is not a unifying property of all the designata. Moreover, since there are many appearances, we would go against the principle of logical economy (*gaurava*).

The New School (Navya-Nyāya), however, reinterprets the word

'*ākṛti*' as a technical term for the relation between the individual and the universal, rather than for an appearance. For our cognition of a cow as qualified by cowhood cannot arise without grasping the relatedness of cowhood to the cow. Therefore, in testimony-based knowledge, the word 'cow' is responsible for presenting the relation between the cow and cowhood, an inherence relation. Now, although this relation is also a unifying feature of all cows, and there is only one such relation, still according to the New School, it cannot be the limitor of the property of being the designatum of the word. This is because inherence-of-cowhood is a composite property while cowhood itself is non-composite, and, in fact, we choose a non-composite property as a limitor if such is available.

There are many words from which one cannot cognise any universal. For example, suppose a child names a wooden toy elephant 'Dittha'. In this case, the word 'Dittha' designates that particular toy. Since the designatum of this word is a unique entity, no universal can be the limitor of the property of being the designatum. However, there is an appearance, and this could be the limitor. In a similar manner, with respect to such words as 'the sky', the designatum is the sky, a disembodied individual. Therefore in this case, we have neither a universal nor an appearance. Nevertheless, there is a limitor of the property of being the designatum, namely the property of being the substratum of sound. Such words are called 'definitionally introduced' (*pāribhāṣika*), because we know that in such cases some person introduced the term by a definition at some point. The great Naiyāyika Jagadīśa Tarkālankāra has noted the following characteristic of definitionally introduced terms. They are terms whose reference is fixed by such a limiting property as is present in not more than one entity.[2]

One may raise the following objection. The properties such as the appearance of the toy elephant or the property of being the substratum of sound are not unifying properties. Therefore, how can they be limitors of the property of being the designatum. We can resolve this difficulty by saying that these properties may not be unifying the objects meant by the words but they will exclude such objects as are *not* meant by the word, and in this way become limitors.

According to the Naiyāyikas, the class of definitionally introduced words contains words which are used to designate only one object. Hence such words can be called names or proper names. Some people illustrate such words by mentioning the names of people, such as 'Rāma'

or 'Śyāma'. However, according to a general belief among the Naiyāyikas, personal names are not designative of single individuals, for if a person's name is 'Rāma' then the designatum of that name is the body of Rāma, and the body of Rāma changes from childhood to youth and from youth to old-age. Since the parts of the body grow and decrease, the whole must be different at different times. For otherwise, if we take a piece of cloth five cubits long, then we can make it ten cubits long by weaving it further, adding more pieces, but we would not be able to say that these two pieces of cloth are different. In fact, purposes that can be served by a cloth of ten cubits cannot be served by one of five cubits. Using such arguments, the Naiyāyikas take the body of Rāma to be different as he passed from his childhood through youth to old-age. On the other hand, the name 'Rāma' is applied to designate these different bodies at different stages of Rāma's life. Therefore the word 'Rāma' cannot be designative of a single individual, although words like 'Dittha' and 'the sky' are. In the context of this paper, however, we will ignore this view of the Naiyāyikas, and assume that names such as 'Rāma' are designative of single individuals, for this will make the following argument elegant and easy to follow.[3]

Consider the sentence

(1) Rāma is the eldest son of Daśaratha.

One may ask which object is caused to be cognised by the word 'Rāma' here. In answer, we may say that the person who is qualified by the property Rāmahood is designated by the word 'Rāma'. Hence the meaning of the sentence is given by a structure (*viṣayatā*) where the person Rāma, being qualified by Rāmahood, qualifies the eldest son of Daśaratha by identity. Here one can raise the following question. Rāmahood is not a universal or a common property because it is present only in one object. Hence what is the nature of this property? We may say that since Rāmahood is not an unanalysable property we have to treat it as a composite one. How do we conceive of this composite property? We can conceive of it as the sum total of all the properties resident in Rāma, and, since the integration of such properties is called 'Rāmahood', the word 'Rāma' would designate the person where all such properties are present. Such an answer, however, does not appear to be appropriate, for one person can be the substratum of innumerable properties or qualifiers. For example, Rāma is the locus of being the eldest son

of Daśaratha, being the brother of Lakṣmaṇa, being the son of Kauśalyā, being the king of Ayodhyā, etc. Nobody can be acquainted with all such properties exhaustively, so Rāmahood would be unknowable.

One may rectify the previous position as follows. Of all the properties, we can select a sub-class of only such properties of Rāma as will uniquely characterise Rāma, and then Rāmahood would by constituted by such a sub-class. In this way, such properties as being the king of Ayodhyā or being the brother of Lakṣmaṇa would not be included in Rāmahood, for such properties are present in other persons, viz. Daśaratha and Bharata. In this way, properties such as being the eldest son of Daśaratha and being the son of Kauśalyā would be included in Rāmahood. Therefore, there is logical economy on the second view. However, this solution also cannot be said to be satisfactory. For the number of properties may be fewer than before but still such properties could be innumerable. Hence it will not be possible for most of us to be acquainted with all such properties in order to determine the designatum of 'Rāma'.

We cannot say that Rāmahood is actually the property of being designated by the word 'Rāma', and such a property is present only in Rāma. For then Rāmahood so defined could not be the limitor of the property of being the designatum of 'Rāma', because there would then be a mutual dependence or circularity: the limitor of the property of being the designatum of 'Rāma' would be constituted by the notion of being the designatum of 'Rāma', and vice versa.

We can resolve this problem as follows. If Rāma is only one person, then, since there cannot be a unifying property, Rāmahood must be a property that distinguishes Rāma from others. In other words, among the properties that distinguish Rāma from entities other than Rāma, one may choose a property which is simpler or less complex than all the others, and at the same time always present in Rāma, and take that property to be Rāmahood. Since we are choosing among several such properties, we have to say that Rāmahood would be just any property which fulfills these two conditions. In this way it is not necessary to know all the properties of Rāma.

One may object as follows. In sentence (1), one cannot have a cognition of the object designated by the word 'Rāma' because up till now the object Rāma has remained unknown. The objector intends the following. In the case of such words as 'cow' and 'pot', we have a previous cognition of a particular object as designatable by the word.

Then when the word is used, the generic feature of the cow helps us to pick out a cow as part of the resulting testimony-based knowledge. However, Rāma is only one person and before the verbal cognition from the sentence arises, Rāma cannot be picked out by any property. This means that so far we do not have a knowledge of what can be designated by 'Rāma'. One may say that Rāma as a person would be presented to us from our acquaintance with such epic stories as the Rāmāyaṇa, and then we will have knowledge of the object designatable by 'Rāma', who will then be qualified by being the eldest son of Daśaratha. But this is also not sound. The designatum of the word 'Rāma' would be on this view the object qualified by being the eldest son of Daśaratha, and the predicate in (1) would designate the object qualified by the same property. Thus the predicate does not become significant and hence testimony-based knowledge cannot arise in this case.

In reply one can say the following. There are many words which designate only one individual, e.g. 'the sky', 'this', 'that', and everybody accepts that testimony-based knowledge arises from those sentences where such words are used. However, we cannot say that one acquires knowledge of the word's designative relation with respect to one individual, but that another individual is cognised in testimony-based knowledge when the word is used. Therefore, that very individual with respect to which one has learned the designative relation is grasped in testimony-based knowledge. It is true that in order to know that Rāma is designated by the word 'Rāma', we need prior acquaintance with Rāma. If we do not have any prior acquaintance, then we cannot know that Rāma is designated by the word 'Rāma'. If Rāma is presented as qualified by being the eldest son of Daśaratha and we learn that such a Rāma is designated by testimony-based knowledge, then the meaning of the phrase 'the eldest son of Daśaratha' and the meaning of the word 'Rāma' would be the same. Hence sentence (1) would be non-significant.

The following can be said in reply to this question. It is not the case that Rāma is presented to us as being qualified only by the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha; Rāma can be presented in other ways, for example we can become acquainted with Rāma as someone who is the son of Kauśalyā, the husband of Sītā, the killer of Rāvaṇa, and so on. Alternatively, we may hear about the different adorable qualities of Rāma or listen to a description of the body of Rāma as being attractive and having long arms. Therefore, we can know that Rāma is

designatable by the word 'Rāma' when Rāma is presented as being qualified by such exclusive properties as being the son of Kauśalyā. When Rāma is presented in this way, from our prior knowledge of the designatum of the word 'Rāma', i.e. as an object qualified by the property of being the son of Kauśalyā, then the predicative property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha would be significant, and we will accordingly have testimony-based knowledge from sentence (1).

There may be another problem here. Since 'Rāma' and the expression 'the eldest son of Daśaratha' both designate the same thing, one may question the usefulness of such a testimony-based knowledge. In reply, the following can be pointed out. The Grammarians regard it as a rule that the meaning of one substantive word should be connected by identity with the meaning of another substantive word which is in apposition with the former. However, if we have two synonymous words placed side by side, as in the case of 'A pot (is) a pot', we could not have testimony-based knowledge. In other words, if the limiting property of being the subject is identical with the limiting property of being the predicate, then there will not be any testimony-based knowledge grasping the designata of the two words as identical. If an object qualified by a property *P* is connected in testimony-based knowledge with another object qualified by *Q*, then the first object is the subject and *P* is the limiting property of being the subject. The second object is the predicate, and *Q* is the limiting property of being the predicate. When the limiting property of being the subject is identical with the limiting property of being the predicate there cannot arise testimony-based knowledge grasping the said identity. When the two words designate the same object but the limiting properties are different, testimony-based knowledge arises which grasps the identity of the designata being presented by two such different limiting properties.[4] In sentence (1), the subject is Rāma, and we can accept the property of being the husband of Sītā as the limiting property of being the subject, for we know that Rāma alone was the husband of Sītā. The predicate is the eldest son of Daśaratha, and the limiting property of being the predicate is the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha. Since the two limiting properties are different, the sentence is significant and we will have testimony-based knowledge from utterances of it.

One may ask the following. This may solve the problem with the above sentence, but how can we then have testimony-based knowledge from the sentence

(2) Rāma is the husband of Sītā.

For by our own admission, being the husband of Sītā and being Rāma are identical. If we argue that the designatum of 'Rāma' here is the eldest son of Daśaratha, then we cannot have testimony-based knowledge from (1). However, we may say that in (1) the word 'Rāma' designated the husband of Sītā, and in (2) it designated the eldest son of Daśaratha. In that case, the previous problem would not arise, for in each sentence the two limiting properties are different.

However, this is not a tenable solution. 'Rāma' is said to designate the person qualified by being the eldest son of Daśaratha in (2) and the person qualified by being the husband of Sītā in (1). In this way we assign to 'Rāma' on this theory different meanings in different sentences. Thus 'Rāma' becomes a word having multiple meaning. This is logically uneconomical. In the case of such words as 'pot', although it is a term which designates different individual pots at different times, Naiyāyikas talk about pothood as the limitor of this designation. Pothood being a single property, the designation relation can pick out any pot. In the case of the word 'Hari', we have at least three different designata, Indra (the king of gods), the moon (Candra) and Lord Viṣṇu. thus designatability by 'Hari' is present in all these three. Since there is no property which unifies these three individuals and distinguishes this set from the rest, we cannot accept a single designatability here, conditioned by such a single property. Therefore, we accept separate modes of designation in each case, so that the word 'Hari' designated Indra in virtue of the latter's being qualified by Indrahood, it designates the moon in virtue of it's being qualified by moonhood, and it designates Viṣṇu in virtue of Viṣṇu's being qualified by Viṣṇuhood. In this way, we regard such words as having multiple meaning. Now, if the designation relation of 'Rāma' is sometimes limited by the property of being the husband of Sītā, and at other times by the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha, then due to the presence of such separate modes of designation, we have to admit the consequence that 'Rāma' is a word with multiple meaning. However, such a consequence is unsatisfactory because it is logically uneconomical, and 'Rāma', as we know, has only one designatum, unlike 'Hari'.

The ancient Naiyāyikas, wanting to avoid this unsatisfactory consequence, have said the following. When a word designates a single individual, its designatum should be an individual without a qualifier.

Therefore the designatum of words such as 'Rāma' would be the individual Rāma unqualified by any such property as Rāmahood, and so, since there is no limitor of designation in such cases, we cannot talk about different modes of designation due to the difference in limiting properties. In sentence (1), the word 'Rāma' presents only the unqualified individual Rāma, and that individual is connected by the identity relation with the designatum of the expression 'the eldest son of Daśaratha'. Similarly, in sentence (2), the unqualified individual Rāma is presented by the word and identified with the husband of Sītā.

Our knowledge of the designation relation in the case of such words as 'pot', which designate qualified entities, differs in its structure from the knowledge of designation in the case of such words as 'Rāma', which designates an individual without any qualification. For in the case of words like 'pot', our knowledge of designation takes the following form: 'Pot is qualified by the word 'pot' through the designation relation', and such knowledge becomes casually responsible for the generation of testimony-based knowledge. In this knowledge of designation, the word 'pot' is the qualifier and the individual pot is the qualificand, the relation between them being that of designation. Following the rule 'Cognition of one relatum generates recollection of the other relatum', our cognition of the word 'pot' causes recollection of the individual pot, and this generates the testimony-based knowledge. Therefore, in the knowledge of designation which causes testimony-based knowledge, the individual pot is the qualificand and pothood becomes the limitor of the property of being the qualificand. Now the limitor of the property of being the qualificand with respect to the designation relation is called the limitor of designation. In testimony-based knowledge, the limitor of designation as a rule appears as the qualifier of the designatum. However, in the case of words which designate individuals without qualification, if knowledge of designation causing testimony-based knowledge takes the form 'Rāma is qualified by the word 'Rāma' through the designation relation', then since Rāmahood is the limitor of the property of being the qualificand, we have to call Rāmahood also the limitor of designation. Therefore, the previous fault reappears. To avoid this, we have to say that on this view the relevant knowledge of designation takes a form in which the qualificand lacks a limitor. This means that Rāmahood does not appear as the limitor of qualificandumhood. Therefore, since in the knowledge of designation no property appears as the limitor of qualificandumhood, as far as the designation

relation is concerned we cannot talk about a manifoldness of meaning, arising out of a difference in their limitors of designation. From words such as 'Rāma', Rāma is said to be presented not being limited by any limitor. This means that testimony-based knowledge is generated in such cases by our non-qualificative (*nirvikalpaka*) recollection of Rāma. The ancient Naiyāyikas in this way admit non-qualificative recollection (*smṛti*). However, non-qualificative testimony-based knowledge is not admitted by anyone. For testimony-based knowledge is knowledge that grasps the connection between objects. Non-qualificative knowledge cannot grasp any relation. Hence testimony-based knowledge cannot be non-qualificative. In sentences like (1), although Rāma does not appear as qualified by Rāmahood, it is at least qualified by the predicate property, the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha, and so the problem of testimony-based knowledge being non-qualificative does not arise.[5]

Critics of this view raise another objection. They think that on this view we cannot explain testimony-based knowledge arising from such expression as 'the wife of Rāma', 'the brother of Rāma', where 'Rāma' becomes the first member of a compound, or a predicate. For there the designatum of 'wife' is the qualificand and the designatum of 'Rāma' is the qualifier. The designatum of 'Rāma' is, on this view, the unqualified Rāma, but we cannot say that such unqualified Rāma would be connected as qualifier to the designatum of 'wife'. For Rāma appears *as such*, unqualified, in the cognition, and the Naiyāyikas do not admit that any object except a universal or an unanalysable property can appear *as such* in a cognition. Therefore, testimony-based knowledge in such cases will be difficult to explain.

To avoid this quandary, some Naiyāyikas have said the following. Rāmahood is not the limitor of the designation of 'Rāma'. It is only a 'pointer' (*upalakṣaṇa*) as far as the designation is concerned. ('Pointer' is being used as a technical term, contrasted with another type of qualifier, called a *viśeṣaṇa*.)[6] Therefore, we can have testimony-based knowledge without any problem from such expressions as 'the wife of Rāma', where the designatum of the word 'wife' is qualified by Rāma, who is picked out by the pointer Rāmahood. For a pointer can also be a qualifier. According to the protagonists of this view, a decree of the form 'Let pot be cognised from the word "pot"' is the designative relation. In the content of this decree, the pot is the qualificand, the qualifier being the property of being cognisable by the word 'pot'. Cognisability means the property of being the object grasped by a

cognition. The meaning of the ablative in the expression (' . . . from the word . . . ') is the property of being caused. Therefore, in this decree the property of being the object of the cognition caused by the word 'pot' becomes the qualifier of the individual pot, i.e. the object that is qualified by pothood. The pot is the qualificand in the complex of objects grasped by the cognition that has been caused by the word 'pot'. Pothood is the limitor of such qualificandhood. Therefore pothood appears in the said decree first as the limitor of the said qualificandhood, and then as the qualifier grasped by the cognition caused by the word 'pot'. When two objects appear as connected with one substratum then we may talk about some relation between them if there is no obstacle to doing so. For example, consider the sentence 'A wealthy person is happy'. This means that the person who is wealthy is happy, so both wealth and happiness appear here as qualifying the same individual, and thus as connected to the same substratum. This leads to our awareness of some sort of causal relation between the two, wealth and happiness. That is, the same sentence will lead us to believe that wealth gives rise to happiness. When a relation appears in this way, it is said to appear as being dependent on the substratum (*dharmī-pāritantreṇa bhāṇa*). That means that since the two properties appear to be connected with the same substratum, they are cognised as being related. However, although in the given example the relationship between wealth and happiness is cognised to be a causal relationship, it is not the case that in each such case, the required relation be causal. In the case under consideration, i.e. in the decree as given above, the two properties, namely pothood and the property of being the object grasped by a cognition caused by the word 'pot', are connected with the same substratum. These two properties are cognised as dependent on the substratum and thereby we can cognise the relation of limitation between them. For the cognition that is caused by the word 'pot' is also the cognition that grasps the individual pot as qualified by pothood, and so the second property stands in the relation of being limited by pothood.[7]

If a property *P* is connected by the limitation relation in this way to the property of being the object grasped by the cognition caused by a word *w*, then *P* is called the limitor of designation (*śakyatāvacchedaka*) of *w*. If such a relation of limitation does not exist with some property *Q* but such a property nevertheless appears in the decrees as the limitor of substratumhood resident in the substratum, where the property of being the object grasped by the cognition caused by *w* also resides, then *Q* is

a *pointer* with respect to the designation of that word *w*. For example, one may have a decree of the form 'Let a substance be cognised by the word "pot"'. Such a decree is possible because a pot is also a substance, and the substance which is a pot is grasped by the cognition caused by the word 'pot'. But such a cognition grasps the substance which is a pot as qualified by pothood, not as qualified by substancehood. Therefore in such a decree, substancehood appears as the limitor of the substratumhood, which substratumhood is resident in a pot, which is also a substance. The property of being the object grasped by the cognition caused by *w* appears as the qualifier. Between these two properties the relation of limitation does not exist, but since both are present in the substratum, a pot which is also a substance, we might cognise a relation of co-location or co-presence (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*) between them.[7] Therefore, substratumhood is not in such cases the limiting qualifier with respect to the object grasped by the cognition caused by the word 'pot'. It is only a *pointer*.

Consider the following decrees:

(i) The eldest son of Daśaratha must be cognised from the word 'Rāma',

(ii) The son of Kauśalyā must be cognised from the word 'Rāma'.

In the first decree, if we admit the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha as limiting the property of being the object of the cognition caused by the word 'Rāma', we cannot cognise Rāmahood as the property of being the son of Kauśalyā, for it has been identified with the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha. On the other hand, if we accept the other property identified with Rāmahood as limiting the property of being the object of the cognition caused by the word 'Rāma', then we cannot cognise Rāma as qualified by Rāmahood identified as the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha. Hence neither of these two explanations of Rāmahood could be intended to be the limitor of the property of being the object of the cognition caused by the word 'Rāma'. However, since both properties qualifying this property, viz. the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha, which limits the property of being the qualificand of the decree, and the property of being the son of Kauśalyā, are present in the same individual Rāma, there is implied a relation of co-location between them. Therefore, both properties are *pointers*, being parts of the structured content of the cognition caused by the word 'Rāma'.

One may object as follows. We admit decree (i). In this decree, the

property of being the object of the cognition caused by the word 'Rāma' is in fact limited by the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha. Therefore, such property would be the limitor of designatumhood. And from such a limiting property we can cognise our individual Rāma from an utterance of the word 'Rāma'. Similarly, we can also admit decree (ii), whereby we can cognise the individual Rāma as qualified by the property of being the son of Kauśalyā. Therefore, here in two different decrees, we have two different limiting properties of designatumhood. But then we are led to the fault of 'Rāma' being a word having multiple meaning, which is not acceptable.

One may also object thus. If the property Rāmahood, identified as the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha, cannot be the limitor of the property of being the object of the cognition caused by the word 'Rāma', then it cannot be the limitor of designatumhood. However, the rule is this: testimony-based knowledge arises when one cognises an individual as qualified by the limiting property of designatumhood. Therefore, we cannot have testimony-based knowledge here by cognising Rāma qualified by the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha (or, for that matter, the property of being the son of Kauśalyā). That is the objection.

In reply to such objections, one may say this. We admit testimony-based knowledge when we cognise an individual as qualified by a property which is only a *pointer* in the matter of designation. That is, a pointer is nothing but a property which is neither more nor less extensive than the property of being the object of the cognition caused by the word 'Rāma' but at the same time it forms a part of the structured content of this cognition. Both properties in the decrees mentioned will fulfil this criterion. Therefore, we can have testimony-based knowledge.

If we follow this line of thinking, then when 'Rāma' is the first member of a compound word such as 'Rāma's wife', the word 'wife' can be easily syntactically connected with 'Rāma', Rāma being presented as being qualified by either of the two properties mentioned.

The modern Naiyāyikas, however, solve the problem in a different way. According to them, just as there is a property which limits the property of being the object grasped by cognitions caused by words which are capable of having many individuals as their designatum, words like 'pot', similarly in the case of a word having a single designatum, there must also be a limiting property. For if one says that from the word

'Rāma', testimony-based knowledge will be generated with the help of the property of being the eldest son of Daśaratha, but that no such property limits the property of being the object grasped by the cognition caused by 'Rāma', this will lead to inconsistencies. Therefore, we must admit that there is a limitor of the property of being the object grasped by the cognition caused by 'Rāma', and that the limitor is also the limitor of designatumhood.

Rāma has many properties, and in any particular instance, a particular property appears as the qualifier in our testimony-based knowledge. Since we cannot have any indication as to how to choose between these properties, we cannot select a particular limitor of designation, and if several properties are admitted as the limitors of designation, then the fault of multiple meaning arises (i.e. a proper name even as applying to a single individual comes to have many meanings). Having thought of all this, the new Naiyāyikas say that in such cases we have to decide very carefully between several factors, such as logical economy or uneconomy, and what kind of special argument can be adduced in favour of one property rather than another. Having done all this, we should select only one property as the limitor of designation. The other properties should be connected through the indicator relation (lakṣaṇā). However, if these considerations do not lead to the tangible result of selecting one property, then we have to admit the fault of multiple meaning.

We think, however, that in the case of words such as 'Rāma', which designate only one person, there must be a limiting property which is resident in the body of Rāma and distinguishing it from what is not Rāma, and that particular property, whatever it is, would be called Rāmahood. How do we have an idea of such a property? Having heard of Rāma for a long time, we will have a pretty good idea of such a property. However, when we have described the activities of Rāma, the description presents some of these properties of his character, nature, and activities, and we may try to take the sum total of all these properties to be the limitor of designation. However, if we choose either the sum total of all such properties or just one of them we will have problems – in the latter case the problem of multiple meaning. We can answer these points in this way. When two objects, having very similar parts, properties, modalities, etc., are connected with our sense-organs, we have cognitions of two different objects and also we cognise their difference. Since we can cognise their difference, we have to admit a special property as the differentiating character. Similarly, the difference between Rāma

and Śyāma, supposing them to be twins or doubles, can be grasped, and the differentiating character in Rāma will be the Rāmahood of Rāma.

One can describe this property as the 'special individuating character' (*tad-vyaktitva*) or 'particularity' of Rāma, for this individuating character is present in only one object, Rāma. This particular individuating character is not the sum total of all the properties of Rāma, nor is it anyone of these particular properties of Rāma. For we cognise such an individuating character residing in Rāma after having given up consideration of the properties of Rāma. For example, a blind person can have a tactile perception of a particular object with its individuating character, so colour or sight can never be part of that individuating character. Similarly, suppose from a distance we see an object. The eye will grasp the object as qualified by the individuating character, having discarded considerations of any graspable tactile property. In this way, other properties of Rāma can be discussed and discarded. All this goes to show that we must admit a particularity resident in a particular object, which will not be one of the usual properties.

Jagadīśa has described this particularity as follows. The particularity is actually identical with the thing itself. This means that that individual is itself the property that individuates it through the relation of identity. It is not a separate ontological category. The idea is this. In order to deal with an object, we have to deal with it as qualified by some property, for we cannot deal with unqualified or unspecified objects. Therefore, if we have a cognition of a particular, then we can only use that particular as qualified by an individuating character, for we need an individuating character in order to deal with the object. This individuating character, we repeat, should be distinguished from the cluster of properties the individual may have, or any one of them, and no other property will be forthcoming to help us out while dealing with an unqualified object. And we have said that it is impossible to deal with an unqualified object without the help of an individuating character. Therefore, we suggest the following way out. The same non-distinct individual should be imaginatively recognised as having a structure of property and property-possessor, and that the property, i.e. the particularity, can only be connected by the relation of identity. On one side of the coin, we have a unique character which is identical with the coin, and on the other side of the coin we have the coin itself.[8]

This way of looking at things may not be entirely unfamiliar to a Naiyāyika. For some Naiyāyikas do admit additional ontological cate-

gories such as the property of being the subject of a relation, the property of being the adjunct of a relation, the property of being the object of a cognition, and so on.[9] Under such considerations, one can take the particularity to be another separate entity.

In conclusion, we must note the following. We have assumed that Rāma is an indivisible person, his personal identity remaining intact from his birth, through his childhood and youth, to his old-age and death. Having adopted such a view of personal identity, we have conducted the above discussion. However, philosophers have said that according to Nyāya this type of personal identity, where 'Rāma' designates one individual throughout, is not acceptable, because Rāma has various bodies at various times in his life. Therefore, Rāmahood is a universal common to all these different bodies. If this view is accepted, then such Rāmahood could be the limitor of designation of 'Rāma'. Otherwise, if 'Rāma' designates the personal identity (or even the soul), then of course the Naiyāyikas would accept the above discussion. In any case, the main issues raised here are genuine and hold provided that proper names are nothing but singular terms designating just one subject.[*]

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NOTES

[1] There may be questions raised here whether such a double function constitutes two different functions or just two sides of the same coin. But for the moment we ignore such questions and follow the author in presenting our translation. (This, and all subsequent footnotes, are additions of the translator).

[2] Here we may be faced with the conflation of two terms. Our author thinks, however, that they need not be distinguished. One is what we call today a singular term or a proper name, which purports to refer to only one object, e.g., 'Rāma', 'Dittha'. The other is a group of such technical terms as are definitionally introduced in a language and presumably refer to only one object, e.g., 'the sky' and 'time'. However, we think that there should be a distinction made here because we are using two different types of term-introduction.

[3] There is some oddity in recording different stages of a person's body as different manifestations of a universal, Rāmahood. For certainly two cows illustrating the manifestations of cowhood do not enjoy the same status as two different stages of the body of the person Rāma. However, there may be another reason, which might explain this

whole disagreement between the Naiyāyikas and modern philosophers. 'Rāma', according to Western philosophers, designates what we understand by the personal identity of Rāma, who is born, then lives and dies. Naiyāyikas look at this matter from a different point of view. For them, it is not the soul or personal identity of Rāma that is designated by 'Rāma', but the visible body of Rāma, which keeps changing over the years. Therefore, they end up with this view, that 'Rāma' isn't a singular term or proper name, but a general term. These two points were suggested by the translator, and verbally accepted by the author.

[4] Could it be an awareness, or anticipation by the Navya-Naiyāyikas, of the Fregean notion of sense, which is by now well-known to us? – Translator's query.

[5] An indication of this view is found in Gadādhara's famous work, the *Śaktivāda*.

[6] A pointer, roughly, is an accidental property which helps us pin-point an individual even if the individual does not possess it always. If a crow has been sitting on a house the crow should be taken as a pointer.

[7] There seems to be a contradiction here, for not every pair of properties which are co-located (*svādhāra-vṛttitva*) can be said to be related by the limitation relation. The author seems to be referring to a view of Gadādhara, where he claimed that under certain conditions two special types of property, such as causehood (*kāraṇatā*), substratumhood (*ādhāratā*), can be related by way of being limitor and limited. Here it must be mentioned that there is a difference of opinion between Gadādhara and Jagadīśa in this regard. Jagadīśa thought that, when a pot is being used to bring water, then the causehood in the pot and the substratumhood in the pot are related by way of identity. Gadādhara argued that this will upset the usual sense of those two concepts. So he claimed that there is only the relation of limitation. We might briefly go a little further. Gadādhara seems to prefer intentional interpretations of such properties, whereas Jagadīśa here thinks that being limited by the same property would be enough for the properties to be identical.

[8] This sounds odd, but occasionally such distinctions have been made.

[9] This is their doctrine of *svarūpa-sambandha*, 'self-connecting' or 'self-same' relations. See Matilal, B. K. The *Navya-Nyāya Doctrine of Negation*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1968.

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BIMAL MATILAL†

UNDERSTANDING, KNOWING AND JUSTIFICATION

1. UNDERSTANDING AND COMMITMENT

In today's world, with the spread of the study of Social Anthropology and/or ethnography as well as our resultant acquaintance with other cultures, we are frequently trained to assert our understanding of a culture or a religion or a world-view that is not our own. In this context the word "understanding" takes on a new meaning. When we say that we have an understanding, that is, a non-committal comprehension of a religious doctrine, we are guarding ourselves from saying that we *believe* in such a doctrine. Inter-cultural studies open up the possibility of such commitment-less understanding.

Some fundamental questions arise regarding this claim of belief-free understanding. Is it possible to have an understanding without our having the slightest commitment to what it is that we understand in this way? Suppose the native believes that the eclipse of the sun brings about misfortune to the inhabitants of a particular land. We can easily say that this is part of the belief-system of a native, while we have a much more scientific approach to the explanation of such natural phenomena. In other words, the native interprets the phenomenon in his own way and we do not have to believe in such things. But there are other areas of the native's belief-system which need not be so outrageous as this one, and in such cases our own interpretation of natural phenomena may not be very different from that of the native. When the native claims that a lump of clay is a lump of clay, rainfall is good for the crops and when the seeds are sown they sprout, we cannot find any better interpretation except perhaps saddling the native with implicit knowledge of *some* scientific details of how a seed becomes a sprout and so on.

The point here is not that our interpretation (understanding) of some of the native's statements may coincide with the beliefs or knowledge-claims of the native as well as those of ours, but a more general question – can we really understand and interpret even part of the native's belief-systems expressed through his statements without forming an idea how and under which conditions these statements will hold true? This may

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 347–366.

or may not be the same as the Davidsonian point. There is no need to quibble over *that* issue. Unless we attribute a modicum of rationality to the general way a native thinks, talks and expresses his beliefs and knowledge-claims, we would not even know how to proceed in our attempt to interpret the native. That we generally do so and succeed even to a limited extent would at least indicate that we maintain, probably at a very implicit level, a basic trust that for the most part the native acts and thinks somewhat rationally (the way we do and are trained to do so by the community).

Lexicographers note various meanings of the attitudinal verb – 'understand' – of which one at least is "to know and comprehend the nature of the meaning of" some statement or object. It is frequently heard 'I understand what you mean' and along with it comes the disclaimer – 'but I do not accept it.' As knowledge or belief is based upon total acceptance, such an understanding of what the speaker means can hardly amount to knowledge on the part of the auditor. If this way of viewing the matter makes it imperative that we must first analyse our understanding of the meaning of a given expression as a primary attitude – a simple non-committal comprehension of what has been intended and communicated by the speaker – then understanding (and the attendant interpretation) can be the intermediate stage in providing us with the final knowledge or belief that we may possibly derive from the testimony of the native or any other knowledgeable person. However, there is another way of reading the matter – this is the view which the Naiyāyikas of India, specially Gangésa, expounded and upheld. Let us turn to their side of the picture.

The speaker does not always utter a sentence to communicate the *literal* meaning. The opposite of 'literal' need not be 'metaphorical'. For Nyāya thinks that the combination of literal and metaphorical is what generally gives the *normal* meaning of an utterance. But there are many other contextual factors which determine the communication-intention of the speaker, and thereby modify the *import* of what he is trying to communicate. Suppose I enter my language class and say, "Translate into Sanskrit; you owe me a million dollars." Here the students must first understand and interpret the sub-sentence, without raising any question about its truth-value. Not that the conditions under which it would be true would be in any way difficult to know (although there are sentences, "A bridge will never be built in this place", and such other Dummettian examples which can and do present difficulties), nor is it the one where

the speaker's communication-intention tends to be obscure or unfathomable by the auditor. The context, however, forewarns the auditor that here a belief or a knowledge-claim is not intended to be transmitted, although we must have a "knowledge" of what the sentence means or a commitmentless understanding of the meaning of the expression from the syntactic and semantic structure permitted by the rules of the language in which the expression is given. A student who will follow these rules will be successful eventually in producing the translation.

Here, it may be claimed, is a case of understanding which does not commit the auditor to the belief that the student owes me a million dollars. But is it really such a case where only a simple understanding is called for and there is no commitment on the part of the auditor to believe anything else? At least two points are pertinent here. First, the student in my class is already aware that this is a class for translation and my first utterance 'translate' would certainly forewarn that the teacher is not trying to communicate knowledge by verbal testimony in this case. Hence, he cannot conceivably mistake my utterance to be an attempt on my part to communicate my intention that he should believe that he owes me one million dollars. There are all sorts of safeguards against such an odd understanding. On the other hand, towards the last part of my utterance, i.e., the sub-sentence, he may wonder whether the uttered sentence is a part of a big joke, or even whether it is a well-formed sentence, for, certainly, it lacks what the Naiyāyikas called *semantic fitness*. For, according to Nyāya, a sentence is not a well-formed one unless it fulfils at least the three conditions (a) the sentence must be formulated following the syntactical and grammatical *rules* of the language; (b) the semantic representations of two or more parts of the sentence must fit each other as such elements do *fit* in the actual world; (c) the world-elements of the sentence must also be spatio-temporally *proximate* to each other. The second one is a stricter requirement on the well-formedness of a sentence for, generally, the property of grammaticalness and the neatness of the world-elements would be regarded as sufficient. I shall come back to these points later.

Suppose we go back to ethnography. The ethnographers supposedly present us with, let us say, impartial description of an alien culture, which includes the alien's religious beliefs, his world-view, and various practices he is engaged in. Our ethnographer must take care to have the proper and correct understanding of the alien culture but should neither commit himself to the way of life the alien is engaged in nor take the belief-

system of the alien to be ultimately valid. He can go as far as asserting that this belief-system is true for the alien but not for us. That is, we may embrace a sort of relativism, which will avoid commitment or any conflict with our own belief-system. Hence, at a deeper level, we may need a fundamental attitude of a commitment-free understanding so that we can extend the horizon of our knowledge of other competing cultures on this earth. There is connection here between the meaning and translatability of the alien sentences and our study of ethnography.

This is, however, a different way of making a case for the epistemology of understanding. And it may be claimed, from a certain point of view, that testimony in general may suffer from this drawback. Our testifier may try to transmit his fanciful beliefs, which are factually false, but the speaker, due to his upbringing or ignorance or whatever, may be impervious to the truth-claim of his beliefs. And our auditor, coming from a different culture or upbringing, where fanciful factual beliefs are discouraged, and some sort of scientific or rational explanation is regarded as the norm, may reject the testimony of our old friend and thereby testimony as a source of knowledge may not fare any better. This is, however, not a very serious objection against testimony. For there are many obvious cases, where the beliefs to be transmitted are transparent enough such that the auditor may and sometimes does take them to be constituting knowledge episodes.

The main question is, however, whether understanding without commitment in such cases is at all possible in our first-hand reading of the alien culture. Of course, if we hear the alien saying or claiming that the eclipse of the sun is an evil omen, we would beg to differ. We will have to prefix his statement by such phrases as "the native believes that . . . " or "he believes that . . . " Now these innocent-looking phrases have some not so innocent-looking significances. The auditor must first *understand* that this speaker is expressing a deep-seated belief of his own and since this does not match any belief of the auditor's own we have to qualify such an attitude expressed by the speaker as the belief of the speaker, such that the auditor should not have any commitment to it.

But is this tenable? 'Understanding' is a difficult word to understand. Lexicons are not very helpful. 'Comprehension' and, I am tempted to say 'comprehension in the right way as the speaker intends it' would be the nearest equivalent offered. The qualification I wish to add to 'comprehension' must also be transferred there. If this is the right way

of proceeding in this matter, then there is an argument against the notion of understanding discussed in the immediately previous paragraph. (a) People do say 'I understand you' and 'I agree', and also (b) 'I understand you but I do not agree'. In this age of disagreement (and this should be welcome, for without disagreement progress of thought may be retarded or arrested), we hear more of (b) than (a). But this does not completely obscure the original meaning of understanding.

Ethnography was started as a subject in our universities for extending our understanding (and we should not hesitate to call it our knowledge, even in the ordinary sense) of these alternative belief-systems, world views, etc., of other cultures, of our "brothers". Whatever might have been the original motive, such as conversion to Christianity, or to find a new world-order, one world with one set of beliefs, one particular religion, living under the same legal democratic culture and freedom (and as rationality demanded, according to the eighteenth-century A.D. European conquerors, that the one "harmonious" universe should be the goal and hence everybody should be even by force brought into the same line of thinking – see for references to such views Berlin, and also Matilal), we cannot preclude the fact that the enquiry was initiated by, at least at a basic level, a genuine desire first to know about a foreign culture. I believe if this initial basis is completely removed then ethnography, which may be as non-committal as possible, and may not require any belief or faith in what the informants tell us (why should it be required at all in any case?), would seem to lose its direction and purpose. That is why I believe this view to be not tenable. Ethnographical understanding today may be regarded, without much difficulty, to be a deliberate and conscious 'step-back' attitude where we deliberately remove our commitment, belief, etc., and take it to be a non-committal but a correct comprehension of the alien cultural statement. This is rather a sophisticated attitude of understanding. It may be called a secondary attitude, carefully cultivated and properly held by the modern ethnographers.

Grammatically, the verb "to understand" takes a singular term as object when it is used non-committally. However, when used committally it takes a clause as object. Another meaning of "understanding" is to grasp the meanings or purport of the words. It is the last-named meaning which prompts such uses as that of understanding an utterance without commitment. Whether this is a fundamental attitude or a complex attitude where we suspend our commitment, is what is in dispute here.

Let us, for the sake of the analogy, refer to the case of my student in my hypothetical translation-revision class. He will not raise his eyebrow when asked to translate a sentence for he is well aware that belief in the *truth* of any of these sentences to be translated as entirely unnecessary and even ridiculous. The context takes care of them all. Hence simple non-committal understanding of the meanings is automatic and uninterrupted and natural. Our ethnographers are sailing in the same boat.

So far we have been avoiding facing a very serious and perhaps philosophically more important charge – the charge that would spring from Frege's dictum (and its enthusiastic interpretation by Dummett and others) that we can *grasp* a thought without judging it to be true or false. Grasping a thought in Frege's language might mean by extension that we can *understand* the meaning of a false statement or whatever, but withhold our belief in it. This is a moot point. Through usual or Dummettian interpretation of Frege's *sense* we may have a sense-centred grasping of the meaning of the sentence given, but not have any commitment to judge it to be true or false. The claim therefore transpires to be this. Understanding can be a basic attitude as soon as a sentence is heard from the speaker – this may be simply grasping the thought expressed.

2. SENSE AND *NIMITTA*

Since Frege, the sense-reference distinction in the philosophy of meaning has been so much pervasive and sometimes over-emphasised that it is unthinkable today that even if we talk about the Indian theories of meaning, questions will not be asked whether Indians made any distinction between sense and reference (especially when we talk about the meaning of singular terms etc.). In the sixties and early seventies, Mohanty and I (following unconsciously the new trend), got involved in a controversy about this issue of sense-reference in the classical Indian context. Mohanty, in the first edition of his book, *Gangésa's Theory of Truth*, seemed to have summarily rejected the idea that the classical Indians had any idea of a *sense* of a term. In my review of this book as well as in my book in the sixties (*Negation*), I protested and said that the Indians operated within the old "property" component of the meaning-complex assignable to a singular term, and what for centuries they called *pravrtti-nimitta*, 'the ground or basis for the application of

a term, or for designating an object by that term', could very well be their answer to some of the functions that Frege's *sense* is supposed to perform. In Navya-Nyāya, this "ground" or "basis" was reinterpreted as "the delimiting property of the designatumhood in the object referred to". This, however, would not fit all the way the concept of Fregean *sense*, as Dummett interpreted it.

In any case, Mohanty is his reply gave a lukewarm support to my comments (and criticism) for the time being. In my 1971 book I tried to explain this rather enigmatic term "basis" or "ground", sometimes with the help of the "supposition" theory of the Western scholastics (see also I. Copi on Properties). In any case, things were not made very clear by either of us at that time. Mohanty has now strongly put forward his negative thesis – no conception of sense among the classical Indians. I believe Mohanty's negative thesis is based entirely on Dummett's interpretation of *sense*. Hence it can be rejected if we reject the sterotyped Dummettan version of Fregean *sense*.

Serious controversy over the interpretation of Fregean *sense* started in the seventies and eighties. There are now formidable opponents of the Dummettan interpretation of *sense* (G. Evans, S. Kripke and many others). In view of all these, we might skip our local problem, i.e. controversy between Mohanty and me, and make some general comments instead.

Our issue here is the thin line to be (or not to be) drawn between understanding and knowing. Knowledge has been traditionally defined as justified true belief, although this has been questioned in recent times. In fact, we have today two different ways of defining knowledge. One is justificationism, the other is reliabilism. These two views of knowledge are regarded as rival views, although it is not always clear whether one view can totally ignore the intuition that is found acceptable in the rival view. The Indian *Pramāṇa* theory appears to be somewhat neutral to this dispute. On the face of it, however, *pramanas* appear to be more akin to the reliable and accredited sources of knowledge. Hence it might be argued that the Indians had a reliabilist view of knowledge. However, this would be misleading for *pramanas* have an implicit characteristic of justificationism.

3. UNDERSTANDING AT A DEEPER LEVEL

It has been upheld by McDowell, that in any communication process "knowledge rubs off" on others like a contagious disease. In fact, we, as Naiyāyikas, tend to accept the picture where, because cosmic "perspectives" is denied, we take in the total stranger who is trying to communicate as "one of us". In this way of looking at things we would be able to *understand* his utterances and even if we do understand them we know that they are part of the pattern whose earlier and later parts we would find familiar.

This picture in some cases appears to be quite normal and automatic. A charge of gullibility, or even the blindness to truth, for we tend to accept everything that the speaker tells us, can be met. However, this is not an important point. What is important in our argument, at least so far, is to make the following point. By deploying a notion of *prima facie* understanding of the meaning of an utterance which does not commit us to the truth or falsity of a judgement we do not get very far in this fashion. For, as far as commitment-free understanding is construction or an abstraction from what actually goes on within the hearer as part of his psychological causal processes, we may construct or abstract the concept of a certain understanding, and recognise that this is not how we first thought of the meaning of the utterance before we judged its truth value. In fact, the Naiyāyikas' point is that understanding the "meaning" of the others and the *prima facie* belief-claims or knowledge-claims go hand in hand. The notion of the meaning constructed out of the senses or the contributions made by the senses of the component expressions becomes justifiable under a Dummettan picture where we have to accept his interpretation of sense. If a different interpretation of a Fregean sense is accepted (as suggested by G. Evans in his criticism of Dummett) then the picture changes dramatically.

There are obvious cases of tautologies: for example, A = A, where it would be somewhat silly to claim that our understanding of the meaning of the utterance has to be intervened by a sense-based interpretation of the sentence. Consider the two following sentences:

(1) Phosphorus = Hesperus
(2) Phosphorus = Phosphorus

The argument of the Naiyāyikas is this. Just as in 2 we make a straight-

forward knowledge-claim the moment we understand the utterance, we also make a similar knowledge-claim the moment we understand the utterance, we also make a similar knowledge-claim, perhaps implicitly, in the case of utterance 1. Although Frege argued that the meaning of these two utterances cannot be the same, for our cognitive experience of 1 cannot be the same as that of 2, this does not affect the Naiyāyika argument that in both cases we make a knowledge-claim and cognitive difference between 1 and 2 can be explained otherwise.

We have tried to show that it is not essential to talk about a prima facie understanding of the meaning of a sentence before we can judge it to be true or false. The Naiyāyikas were against the deployment of such a basic attitude prior to the belief-claim or knowledge-claim that arises in the hearer. The belief-claim or knowledge-claim should arise in the hearer, according to the Naiyāyikas, as soon as the *well-formed* utterance is heard. It can only leave certain conditions unfulfilled. What is important to note in this connection is that the Naiyāyikas do not think that the perception of speaker's qualities, such as competence and reliability, play any role to generate belief-claims. Hence knowledge from testimony would be more or less automatic if the uttered sentence fulfils the (already mentioned) following three conditions. First, the words uttered must be grammatically acceptable. In other words, the words and inflexions must be juxtaposed following the conventional rules of grammar and syntax of the language. This property has been called sometimes syntactic expectancy. The second condition is that the world-elements must be proximate to each other such that interconnections between them would be transparent. This property is sometimes called 'proximity' in time and space of the world-elements. The third condition, however, is more important. It is called the semantic fitness. The word-elements constituting the utterance should be such that the meaning of one should fit the meaning of the other. In other words, words cannot be juxtaposed at random so as to produce nonsensical utterances such as "pigs fly" and "drink bananas". These utterances lack semantic fitness or compatibility. This property of fitness is very important as far as knowledge by testimony is concerned. The Naiyāyikas claim that this would be enough for the hearer to judge whether the thought expressed is true or false and, if the hearer can grasp the thought as well as judge it to be true or false, then the hearer's understanding of the meaning of the utterance would amount to the hearer's knowledge of what has been conveyed by the word.

4. ON THE FITNESS CONDITION

The fitness condition is broadly defined by the Naiyāyikas to take care of at least two important cases of misfires in testimony where testimony would mislead the hearer. These cases of 'misfires' in testimony can be understood as follows. Suppose we have an impossible condition: "the child of a barren woman". Obviously the fitness condition is not fulfilled here and we can easily reject the possibility of knowledge from such a combination. But the more important case would be to decide where the two words have *some sort* of semantic fitness, i.e., they are not incompatible, but the combination is not something that we find in the actual word. It would then be very difficult to decide whether the combination would be true or false. Consider the following sentence. "There is an elephant in the next room". Now it is possible that there is an elephant in the next room but the hearer has not seen it. The question arises whether the utterance would have semantic fitness. The Naiyāyikas would say that as long as the hearer cannot rule out the possibility of there being an elephant in the next room, he would have to accept it as semantically fit and therefore he must have a belief-claim from such utterances, provided that even the slightest doubt does not *infect* his attitude.

When an utterance is understood non-committally one expects the following special features to be present in the context, e.g., a belief or a doubt that the speaker is a liar, or the suspected impossibility of connection between the word elements. Nyāya believes that if the fitness condition is fulfilled then committed understanding or knowledge from the utterance would be our first reaction. This, however, invites the following problems.

How can we grasp the fitness condition unless we already have a non-committal grasp of what would be a possible combination? This question, according to Nyāya, is a pointer to the right direction where the solution of the puzzle lies.

The notion of fitness must be understood by considering not only the context of the utterance but also the hearer's belief system, and the social factors in the linguistic practice, that is the division of linguistic labour (I owe this point to my student, J. Ganeri). It is the pervasive practice according to which the hearer defers to others, in particular the speaker, to fix the meaning of the utterance. This will resolve the question whether it is possible for an elephant to be in the next room.

The hearer takes the speaker to be an 'expert' in having a background knowledge and, hence, the utterance would have no obstacle in being accepted as true. Although both are fallible, the speaker and the hearer, it is granted that the hearer's acceptance of what the speaker says is not mitigated by the usual factors, doubt, prior knowledge to the contrary, unreliability of the speaker etc.

In the example, "*there is an elephant in the next room*", since the elephant is an observational concept, such that every one is an "expert" about, as far as its meaning is concerned, the hearer need not doubt the veracity of the statement. So the fact remains that the meaning is socially determined by division of linguistic labour and this leads to the conclusion that such utterances are understood committally and they are semantically fit.

The Naiyāyikas (e.g., Gangésa) argued that the hearer need not bother to study such speaker-oriented qualities as sincerity and commitment. for even a well-formed sentence may be presented accidentally to the hearer (where the speaker may not be known to the hearer at all) and communication will take place without difficulty.

The Naiyāyikas insist that even the conscious knowledge of fitness is not necessary. Lack of knowledge to the contrary is all that we need for generating belief or knowledge-claim from testimony. This lack will take care of all the 'misfires':-

(a) The speaker may be lying, in which case knowledge-claim will be withdrawn when further evidence is unfolded.
(b) The speaker may be mistakenly speaking the truth while he wants to mislead the audience.
(c) The speaker, a compulsive liar, is trying to communicate knowledge to his audience, as it generally happens.

Whether or not the above argument (gleaned mainly from Gangésa) can finally show that we have directly knowledge or belief claims by testimony without the intervention of non-committal understanding of the meaning of the utterance, is a matter that may still be disputed. However, some advantage has been shown to exist in the Naiyāyika's claim which avoids the problem of studying or guessing the psychological qualities of the speaker.

5. PROPOSITION AND THE COGNITIVE CONTENT

The idea of a commitment-free understanding is sustained sometimes by the notion of a proposition or the thought (Frege) grasped by such an attitude. Nyāya sees the matter in a different way. The Naiyāyikas do not accept a proposition or a third realm of reality such as Frege's thought. The content of cognition either belongs (as a property) to the cognition itself, or it is identical with the qualified objects or fact grasped by the causally related to the cognition itself. This, however, creates difficulty in the Nyāya explanation of the content of a false belief, false statements, make-believe, etc. Nyāya, therefore, talks about two types of content, simple and complex. The complex content is what is constructed by compounding simple atomic contents.

We analyse the cognition of a pot belonging to the subject *S* as the simple content, i.e., the pot. This pot is identical with the pot outside. However, consider the sentence:

"*S* cognizes that the flower is red".

Here, the content of the cognition can be analysed as follows: The contenthood in the flower is qualified by contenthood in red. For short, we can write this as:

"*Q* (that flower, red)"

This is an example of complex content. Here too a content should be identical with a fact in the real world that is causally related to the cognition.

The *complex* content according to Nyāya is of two types, the "qualified" content and the "conditioned" content. The above is an example of a "qualified content", for the contenthood in that flower is qualified by the same in red. The content of a false belief would be a "conditioned content".

Suppose that flower is not red but *S* mistakenly thinks that it is red. Then "*S* thinks that that flower is red" can be represented as involving a contenthood where one part is *conditioned* but not *qualified* by another part. This can be represented as:

"*Q(S, Q* (thought, *C* (that flower, red))"

Here "*C* (that flower, red)" should be read as: Contenthood in that flower is *conditioned cognitively* by the contenthood in red. Therefore it does not matter if the flower in question is not objectively qualified by red. The element expressed by such description as " . . . is conditioned by . . . " is a property of the cognitive event itself, and not of the world outside.

This notion of a conditioned content can be regarded as the Nyāya substitute for proposition in the thought grasped by cognition. But this is not identical with the notion of a proposition.

6. IS TESTIMONY-BASED KNOWLEDGE A CASE OF PERCEPTION?

Those who are even in favour of allowing testimony-based knowledge and answer the sceptics by various sorts of replies and evidence, still think, as knowledge, it is not *sui generis*, i.e., it is not an independent type of knowledge, such as perception and inference. If the knowledge types are already exhausted by this two-fold classification, on whatever grounds, then the story ends there. We can conveniently define and articulate a ground or criterion for the distinction of the two sub-classes of knowledge, and any other candidate for knowledge that we are prepared to take in, should be pushed into these two available pigeonholes. However, if we are prepared to take a less drastic attitude towards counting types or sub-types or towards groupings and base classificatory principles upon discoverable properties or features or causal conditionings or whatever, we may be reluctant to saddle ourselves with the most well-known two-fold classification of knowledge, perception and inference. However, it will be still open to us that to examine and compare any putative candidate against the available definitional criteria of perception and inference and we may then decide to include or subsume (or not) the candidate into either classes.

Testimony-based knowledge is a candidate, let us say, which can be confronted with such a tentative procedure. The prevailing opinions differ whether to call testimony-based knowledge a special case of perception or, in fact, an inference. Turning to the classical Indian side of the picture, we see much more complexity on this issue. The two well-entrenched philosophical traditions, the Vaisesika and the Buddhist, allow knowledge from words (*śabda*), but include it under inference. The former expended more energy over the years for this purpose, specially because their sister tradition, the Naiyāyika or the Nyāya system, dis-

agreed. Almost all the other traditions were in favour of according a separate status to testimony, although the Mimamsakas contended that the non-scriptural testimony may and does impart informations about the world but that could hardly amount to knowledge, according to their preferred definition of knowledge. Scriptural testimony, however, does yield knowledge – this thesis was accepted by most parties concerned.

If we first consider the Indian problem of reducibility to perception, we may start with some further comments. This problem is discussed by the thirteenth century-sixteenth century philosophers, Naiyāyikas like Gangésa and Jagadisa. But it would be impossible to find out who actually held this view, for historical evidence – texts – are not available. Speculation among the modern Sanskrit pandits is that it was held by Cārvākas, the materialist, for in their view, all knowledge is perceptual and inference deals with only probabilities and lucky guesses. However, we may safely ignore this. For there is not a single text of the Carvaka school where the problem has been dealt with. Our best bet is to see how Gangésa and his followers would construct such a position in order to refute it.

Very briefly, then, let us run over the argument presented. A superficial way to call it perceptual is to designate it as a "mental" perception. Since the objects presented by words are not presented to our ken of (external) perception, and consequently the sensory input is not possible, we may think of the "inner" eye, the mind organ. Many things are perceived in this way – such as our inner states, pain, desire and even the more "mental" image or content of such states. Hence, words present the meanings or objects to the mind and we perceive it. But this will not do. For external objects, i.e., bits of the meaning of our language, cannot be "mentalized" so easily. Nyāya does not contribute to any form of representationalism in their realism, and hence the sophisticated form of mental representation of objects is unavailable to do justice to the claim of mental perceptual grasp of the word-represented objects. If anything, it would be like an actualized bit of memory with a new construction – a case similar to remembering. But it would be presumptuous to call it a perception.

There is, however, a more serious way, conceded by Nyāya, to expose the perceptual character of the knowledge of testimony. Memory-based elements, i.e., elements of the content of a perception, contributed by our own memory-bank, are admitted without much ado by Nyāya in many well-known cases. In perceptual error, e.g., "This is a snake", the

snake-hood is admitted by Nyāya to be perceptually grasped, or sometimes a memory-borne particular snake, experienced in a previous encounter, is admitted to be identified, through a mental operation called 'superimposition' (*aropa*), with the object present in the visual field, a rope, and then perceptually grasped. Even a correct or veridical case of perception can be serviced by memory in the same way. My perceptual judgement, "I see cold ice outside", consists of the property, coldness, which invariably and necessarily characterizes ice, and is automatically presented to us within my perceptual ken, *maybe* internally. In any case, through habituated constant association of cold and ice in our adult life for a long time we are conditioned to take the ice in along with its dominant quality, coldness, despite the fact that cold touch is grasped usually by tactile organ, not by the visual one. Since there is propensity to take this judgement to be perceptual, the difficulty in explanation is removed by holding that memory presents with the required element to our perceptual ken. Such capacity is admitted, for in such limited cases it is predicated with proper care and caution and our usual cases of misperception where the so-called absent elements, the properly represented characteristics etc., are frequently grasped and we would not budge to include them in our description of the content of the erroneous perception.

One safeguard against taking this alleged looseness in the theory for supporting some wider guessworks as having perceptual claims is, according to Nyāya, to insist upon some peculiarities that the above examples do possess, and thereby facilitate their perceptual claim. One may not go on counting such claims as "I see the hand once shaken by the queen" or "I see the dog that bit John yesterday" to be perceptual. For the general conditioning of the subjects through constant conjunction in the repeated (and repeatable) past experiences has not taken place in the counterexamples. The verb "see" must be used by metaphorical extension to mean 'cognition' in general. Besides, only certain specific properties or appendages of the substrate-object that is given already in perception can be dragged to the perceptual ken in order to qualify or characterize it. The presentation of the substrate-object, the rope or the ice, carries with it *some of the physically* unpresented characteristic, and ridden on the shoulder of memory of its previously experienced form such characteristic is also presented to the subject, not to his "inner" eye to be sure, but to his physical eye. In grasping the substrate-object, eye cannot but grasp also, due to the peculiarities

of the circumstances, the most overt properties as characterizing the former.

Now, we are ready to test the perceptual claim of testimony-based knowledge in this way. The words present the objects to the perceiver-hearer via media memory, who puts construction upon them to form a connected whole, the alleged content of the resulting knowledge or understanding. This view may appear similar to another (modern) view, well argued on different grounds. Arguing against the possibility of comprehension of our full linguistic behaviour from "the cosmic exile's perspective", McDowell remarks that to avoid the Dummettan dilemma of psychologism on the one hand and the difficulty of recognizing the unproblematically detectable facts, we can exercise our "perceptual capacity" and describe our full perceptual intake on the occasion of testimony, in terms of knowledge, in a non-question begging way, that is, what we ascribe to the subject – the hearers, when we say that they are competent language-users and understand the sentence uttered.

One argument is based upon the fact that our command of a language provides us, though not necessarily universally, with additional perceptual capacity. Exploiting the slogan "working one's way into language is working one's way into a conception of the world", as well as other comments of Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*, it has been asserted:

> Command of a language is partly constituted by just such a perceptual capacity; one whose acquisition makes a new range of facts, not hitherto within one's perceptual ken, available to one's awareness (McDowell, 1981, p. 39).

Acquisition of such a perceptual capacity through the acquisition of linguistic ability is admittedly a fact. Hence, the idea would be, tentatively, this. In perceiving the words or utterances, we are invariably conditioned to take in perceptually the meanings or the truth-conditions which constitute the other side of the language. It would be wrong to think of our linguistic competence merely in terms of our being able to make and react to sounds in a way one had been drilled to feel comfortable with. Use of a language does not mean simply blind responses to stimuli like perceptually grasped utterances which are expressive of thoughts. In addition, we are capable of, by our use of language, utterances which are expressive of such thoughts. Users of language, on this view, are also justifiers, reasoners, arguers and articulators.

7. JUSTIFICATIONISM, RELIABILISM AND THE CASE OF A COMPULSIVE LIAR

It has been argued (e.g., by Fricker, 1987) that the theory of testimony-based knowledge favours a certain Justificational conception of knowledge as superior to any version of the Reliabilist conception, where the latter excludes any justification criterion. Justificationism is therefore given a stronger version by Fricker through the inclusion of the requirement that a subject should be able to formulate and offer a suitable justification of his belief: "knowers, on such a theory, must be . . . operators within the 'space of reason'; not just optimally wired-up registrars of information, but moreover reasoners and justifiers, arguers, and of course, articulaters – users of a language" (p. 62).

Now, it seems to me, if an initial belief-free understanding of what is testified to be is denied, and brainwashing, deceit etc. being more frequent than we wish them to be, if belief and therefore knowledge-claim be said to be generated or derived from testimony, the view (our alternative view) would tend to accommodate *primarily* a Reliabilist conception of knowledge (a true belief is knowledge when acquired by a reliable method or in an accredited way), which need not make a short work of justification. The Indian *pramāṇa* theory that was favoured by Nyāya can be seen as a version of such an account of knowledge, which sorts our different belief- or knowledge-producing causal processes, such as perception, inference and testimony. However, these accredited sources or causal processes were not often posed there as offering justificatory grounds, although on occasions a knowledge-claim that *P* might be defended partly by explaining how one had epistemic access to *P* and partly by corroborative evidence or other tests such as successful action or essential likeness with past knowledge-events. In other words, the notion of a reliable method or mechanism was the guiding principle which accommodated the justification requirement presumably by way of answers to a challenge to explain how it is that we know what we claim to know. There was thus a space which seemed to allow unchallenged and non-dubious true beliefs to be knowledge provided an accredited method had been in operation.

There is a further issue already indicated, that of the speaker's or the testifier's competence, sincerity and trustworthiness, which the upholder of Exclusive Justificationism tends to hammer at. Of course, the hearer's specific knowledge of these properties of the speaker may

not be demanded except in a question-begging manner. Hence the Justificationist would be content to settle for a weaker condition, the hearer be in possession of a less than conclusive argument for justifying what is known. Otherwise, it would be giving in to two unpalatable extreme options, excessive scepticism on one side and honouring gullibility on the other.

The upholder of the given version of Reliabilism which does not preclude justification altogether may see this relaxation of the criteria as coming closer to the second line of thinking already noted which discounts the contribution of a belief-free understanding to epistemology. It has already been noted that, on this view too, the testifier's properties such as competence and trustworthiness certainly constitute the ground or the guarantee for the emerging knowledge in the hearer. However, the conscious possession by the hearer of the knowledge of such properties ('I *see* the speaker honest and sincere', 'I *know* that he does not usually deceive or lie', etc.) or the conscious use of such criteria in support 'within the space of reasons' is what is denied here. For true belief, and therefore knowledge of what is heard, may arise in the hearer even without such extraneous justification and reasoning, and a Reliabilist would not find it hard to account for the origin of such knowledge in so far as his conception of knowledge goes. Knowers, on this view too, are not only gatherers of beliefs following some normative patterns but also capable of reflecting upon those patterns, are both registrars of information and reasoner, i.e., justifiers. But these dispositions, on this view, do not show themselves unless and until a challenge is posed or a doubt infects the cognitive attitude.

The last point in the previous paragraph seems to answer also the charge of gullibility. As insisted already, the justification requirement, through causal explanation or other kinds of inference, are not completely left out of this account of knowledge. True belief arising out of an accredited way or reliable method (and testimony is one such accredited source) would amount to knowledge, if the condition for doubting its truth, sudden intervention of a contrary evidence or some such thing, does not arise simultaneously or immediately. There is a well-known caveat to this argument, which we may discuss briefly now. This is the case of a compulsive liar who happens to be misinformed on a given occasion (a case cited and discussed in the Indian tradition by Gangésa), or an accidental true belief from, say, brainwashing. Brainwashing is not a reputable source of knowledge nor is the utterance of a compul-

sive liar who is known to be so, although both have some claim to have a superficial similarity with the process involved in the acquisition of knowledge by testimony. The Justificationist (Exclusivist) might score here a point over Reliabilism by arguing that she would not reject outright the knowledge-claim of such a belief, provided some acceptable justification can be given or a conclusive evidence of its truth is forthcoming, the disreputable causal history notwithstanding.

The Reliabilist who tries to maintain the second line of thinking would not find it difficult to resolve this problem or at least to get around it. There is, in the first place, something wrong in the purported claim that a subject derived even a belief, no matter whether true or false, from the process we call brainwashing if it is known to the subject as brainwashing. For our initial reaction to the liar's utterance of a sentence (when he is known to us to be a liar) will not be a belief in what he says, but a disbelief. The only thing we are certain of on such an occasion is that we have an awareness (a knowledge) that the speaker wants us to believe that *P* (where *P* is what is said). Knowledge or belief that *P* will not emerge in our consciousness for the mitigating circumstances or the contradictory conditions exist. In the perspective of a causal theory of mental events, we can call such circumstances knowledge-stoppers or belief-stoppers. For example, if somebody *S* knows that the grass is green at a particular time and place, she cannot have a knowledge or even a belief that the grass is not green. In such cases we can call knowledge that *P* is what *stops* emergence of belief or knowledge that *not P* in the same knower at the same time and place, and hence the former is a belief-stopper. Thus if we are faced with a statement from the brainwashing agency or even confronted with a compulsive liar, we will have in us a condition already present which is belief-stopper and hence knowledge-stopper. If later on we come to learn that the state of affairs reported by such disreputable agencies does obtain, we will have a knowledge that is arrived at by another reliable method and justified on different stronger evidence.

The rather intriguing case would be when the hearer does not have a prior knowledge that the speaker is a compulsive liar or belongs to the brainwashing agency and the reported state of affairs by such agencies does obtain only by accident. In this case, the hearer has a belief which is true and has it derived from, as far as he knows, a reliable method, and hence we have to accept that she has knowledge. this only means that knowledge by testimony does not depend always upon the inten-

tion of the testifier, but rather on what she testifies to, and how she does it. If, however, the speaker, knowingly or unknowingly, misinforms his audience, and the auditors are unaware of it, then the auditors are at his mercy. False beliefs will be generated and the auditors would not *know* that they are false until and unless further evidence comes to their notice. In this respect, however, testimony as a source of knowledge is in no way less reliable than perception and inference.

The Justificationist (Exclusivist) may insist that to fend off gullibility the hearer's possession of knowledge of the alleged properties of the speaker, competence, sincerity and trustworthiness, must be appealed to. For the opponent, in his argument against the case of brainwashing or a misinformed liar has conceded that knowledge of the disqualifying properties of the testifier acts as belief-stopper. This is, he will say, only an indirect admission of the importance of qualifying properties. The Reliabilist, however, would demur. For he insists that the qualifying properties are important, but a knowledge on the part of the hearer of such properties of the speaker is not a pre-existing condition or factor for the emergence of knowledge by testimony. The hearers or auditors, on this view too, may not be just "optimally wired-up registrars of information" for they also have disposition to reason and justify. However, they gather knowledge or registrar information through the usual reputable and reliable mechanism unless a spanner is thrown in the works. When challenged, they reason and justify or search for good evidence. When conditions prevail, the relevant belief does not emerge. If contrary evidence is adduced, a previously gathered belief is given up. However, it is difficult to see how the properties of the speaker, such as competence and reliability, which are supposed to be perceptually grasped by the hearer could help us to determine the truth or falsity of the information gathered in the cases under consideration. On the other hand, it seems that by insisting upon the fitness condition negatively, i.e., upon the lack of knowledge of unfitness (knowledge to the contrary), Nyāya enjoys some advantage over its opponents (see also Matilal, 1990, pp. 65–8, *The Word and the World*, and pp. 72–4).

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GAṄGEŚA ON SELF-MENTIONING WORDS

I

Thought involves language and for everything in this universe that we can think of we must have some word or other at our disposal to refer to. Thus, for sound and linguistic elements we also have words, e.g., 'sound', 'word', 'sentence' etc. The interesting question here is: how is a word related to itself if it stands for itself? Is the relationship same as the one that obtains between a word and its designatum, or is it different? The philosophers of the Western tradition have recently shown interest in such questions, and most of them now accept the distinction between *using* and *mentioning* although they normally discuss the issues with reference to words of written language and independently of the issues concerning meaning. But such questions regarding self-reference of linguistic elements were considered by philosophers of India in the past to be part of the theory of meaning.

We begin our discussions with 'other-referring' words that stand for things and may on occasions stand for themselves. Let us consider the first such example offered by Gaṅgeśa[1]

AR-1 (AR = Auto-Reference)

Gām uccāraya

Say '*go*' (= the base corresponding to '*Gām*').

The first constituent of AR-1 is the object to the verb '*uccāraya*' meaning 'pronounce/utter/say'. According to the rules '*Gām*' has been rightly used in the second case-ending. The root corresponding to '*Gām*' is '*go*' which is known to stand for cows. On listening to the sentence the hearer will first try to take the first constituent as meaning a cow. But by taking it that way he fails to arrive at an acceptable interpretation of the sentence, for a cow is not what can be pronounced or uttered. Hence, the hearer travels back to the word that stands for a cow for arriving at an acceptable interpretation. The route to this interpretation is then a trial with the standard or normal meaning and then shifting to something that is related to this normal meaning and in this case this relation is nothing other than the relation of being designated by. The procedure thus suits

B.K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds), Knowing from Words, pp. 367–384.

the situation for what is known as transfer of meaning in Indian philosophy[2] and Gaṅgeśa holds that this is actually involved here in respect of the constituent '*Gām*' in AR-1.

We shall now present a similar example. Let us suppose that an Indian student of contemporary Western epistemology has acquired knowledge about the foundationalists and coherentists and has learnt from a text in his vernacular that Chisholm is a foundationalist. He has mastered the name from the text which shows that the letter 's' goes with 'i' of the first syllable and has found that the name looks similar (so far as the last syllable is concerned) to the name of Conan Doyle's detective character Sherlock Holmes. The student thus learned to pronounce the word 'Chisholm' as 'Chis-holm', that is, somewhat in the manner the name of the detective character is pronounced. Let us imagine further that when he was talking about Chisholm's views with his teacher (who knows the correct pronunciation), the latter noticed the mistake. He promptly tried to teach him the correct pronunciation by correctly pronouncing it with the help of the following sentence

AR-2

Say 'Chisholm' (Chi-sholm').

The immediate response was one of confusion as the student first tried to understand the word as standing for the philosopher. He soon realised that his teacher's word refers to the name itself. The route to this is never direct but through the idea of the philosopher to his name.

Gaṅgeśa anticipates here an objection to his view. It is indeed true that a hearer can arrive at the meaning of any given sentence and form a corresponding belief if the meanings of the words contained in the sentence are already known to him beforehand. However, the objects the words stand for need not be present in his surroundings. Since he already knows the meanings of words he recalls the objects on hearing the words and then arrives at the sentence-meaning and this process of recalling is involved in cases of use of words with normal meaning and also in cases of words with a shift in or transfer of meaning. According to the objector, since the word '*Gām*' in AR-1 or 'Chisholm' in AR-2 means itself and has been presented to the hearer through his hearing, there is no scope or need for recalling the word here and thus also no scope for postulating the relation of either normal meaning or of transfer

of meaning in this context. The intention or purport of the speaker is palpably clear here and if necessary we can take this as the route to the construing of the sentence-meaning. But it is natural to have some apprehension here about the objector's proposal to treat the speaker's intention as the route to what his word stands for. It is indeed true that if the speaker's intention can be rightly guessed it will help us opt for the right sense of a word, in case the word used is a homonym. We may also select the appropriate shift in meaning in case a word has not been used in its standard or normal meaning. Knowledge of the speaker's intention may thus sometimes be useful to arrive at the right sort of sentence-meaning. But speaking generally, to assign to the speaker's intention the status or role of a sort of meaning-relation would involve undue dependence on subjective factors and make the process of linguistic understanding a matter of chance or coincidence which certainly it is not.

The objector might here observe that even if intention is not taken as a substitute for meaning-relation we can rightly hold that the meaning-relation, in case of the use of a word in its normal meaning (which is called *śakti* in Sanskrit), or the same in case of the use of a word with a shift in or transfer of meaning (which is called *lakṣaṇā* in Sanskrit), is such that the word and what it stands for are distinct from each other. But in case a word refers to itself this fact of distinctness is missing. This justifies us in reaching the negative conclusion that no meaning-relation can be said to obtain here; the objector also would not thus press for the position that the speaker's intention is the substitute for meaning-relation in such cases.

In reply to the objector's stand Gaṅgeśa appeals to certain linguistic phenomena to show that there is no escape from meaning-relation even when a word stands for itself. He thus refers to Pāṇini according to whom only a *prātipadika* can take upon itself non-verbal suffixes of the variety needed for declension and called *subantavibhakti*. Other non-verbal suffixes can be added to nouns or noun-equivalents to yield words similar in nature to the root. For example, the suffix '*cha*' yields '*acchāvākīya*' when added to '*acchāvāk*'. Pāṇini defines a *prātipadika* as one which is meaningful (*arthavat*) but distinct from a verb (*adhātu*) and also from a suffix (*apratyaya*). Gaṅgeśa emphasises the element of positive characterisation in Pāṇini's definition and holds that since '*Gām*' in AR-1 is the product of a *prātipadika* and a *subanta* suffix and

'*Acchāvākīya*' in

AR-3

Acchāvākīyam Sāma. The hymn beginning with word '*acchāvāk*' belongs to *Sāmaveda* is the product of '*acchāvāk*' and the non-verbal suffix '*cha*', the concerned words (i.e. the *pratipadikas* '*go*' in AR-1 and '*acchāvāk*' in AR-3) must be meaningful even though they stand for themselves. In the other tradition also sentence-meaning is held by majority of philosophers as the function of the meanings of words. Thus, even if in any language some constituent of a sentence, say 'Chisholm' in AR-2, does not take upon itself any suffix it will be held as meaningful. And if the speaker's intention is not to be regarded as a kind of meaning-relation, the meaning-relation obtaining in the concerned cases in AR-1, AR-2 and AR-3 must then be the meaning-relation of the sort involved in cases of the use of words with normal meaning or with a shift in or transfer of meaning. Gaṅgeśa points out that as '*go*' does not mean cow in AR-1 (and 'Chisholm' does not mean the philosopher in AR-2) or as '*acchāvāk*' does not mean a priest in AR-3 (which constitute the normal meanings here), the words have been used with a shift in meaning.

Gaṅgeśa now turns his attention to the objector's claim that the words in question in situations like AR-1, (AR-2) and AR-3 are sensibly present to the hearer. All words barring single-lettered ones, if there be any, are combinations of sounds corresponding to letters constituting the words. Viewed thus a word represents a sequence of succeeding sounds and when the utterance of a word comes to an end what is sensibly present to the hearer is only the sound corresponding to the last letter and not the whole sequence. The objector might suppose here that though a word is a combination of letters and the sequence of sound corresponding to a word is analysable into different sounds represented by the constituent letters, we can nevertheless treat the sound corresponding to a word as a single perceptible datum composed of percepts and percept-like images. But even if this point is conceded, this so called perceptible datum, as Gaṅgeśa points out, does not remain so with the hearer when he arrives at the understanding about sentence-meaning, for this can emerge only if other requisite processes considered necessary such as knowledge of well-formedness (*ākāṃkṣā*) and of contiguity of relevant constituents (*āsatti*) intervene between this datum and his

understanding to emerge. Furthermore, so far as the Sanskrit sentence AR-1 is concerned, the auditory datum '*Gām*' in AR-1 is not what is being advised to be uttered by AR-1, for it does not mean 'Say '*gām*''. It rather means

'Say '*go*''.

If what is here taken by the hearer thus as the sound to be uttered is not the transformation '*Gām*' but the root '*go*' (which is not a datum here) the objector's argument loses its edge. Gaṅgeśa further points out that if the objector wants to capitalise this claim about the givenness of the sound the word in question stands for there will be an awkward situation like the following one. He wants us to consider

AR-4

Gaur asti
Gaur ('The cow') *asti* (exists).

To the hearer the sound corresponding to the first word of AR-4 is a sensible datum and thus there is no difficulty in taking this datum as a thing that exists. But the first word may be used to designate a cow and if it is used that way then the sentence means:

The cow exists
and not
'*Gaur*'/'*Go*' (the base of 'gaur') exists.

But if the mere fact of givenness is considered sufficient for taking the auditory datum corresponding to the first word as an element in the interpretation of the meaning of the sentence in case, this datum seems to agree with the meaning of the other constituent. Now, interpretation of the meaning of the sentence will always be in the form ''*Gaur*'/'*go*' exists' and never in the form 'The cow exists'. The reason for this is that the auditory datum which is to lead to the notion of the cow will not do so because this (being self-referring and (because of its givenness) being already instrumental to a construing of sentence-meaning) will be inoperative in giving rise to the notion of the cow which is necessary for the construing of the other meaning of the sentence. Thus if AR-4 asserts that the cow exists the hearer will not be able to arrive at it. If, however, we accept Gaṅgeśa's point of view that when a word is self-

referring it must be through transfer from the normal meaning to the shift in meaning, there will be no such difficulty. We shall present here an example from the English language. Consider the following sentence:

AR-5

God exists.

If the objector's claim is to be conceded we shall have to say that the hearer will always take the first word as standing for the word-sound *God* and will interpret the sentence as asserting its existence. Since this interpretation is quite plausible there would thus be no scope for any other interpretation. But if it were the case there would not have been any issue at stake between the theist and the atheist.

II

Gaṅgeśa anticipates an objection to his view and the objector wants us to consider AR-6

AR-6

Ja-ba-ga-ḍa-da-śam āha.

The first word of AR-6 represents an arrangement of letters utilised in Pāṇinian grammar in various ways. There are two approaches towards the ordering of letters of the Sanskrit alphabet according to one of which the established and familiar ordering of letters are unsuitable for a compact and economical system of explanation of the origin of words. Thus Pāṇini himself prefers a different pattern of arrangement of the letters to the familiar phonetic ordering and he follows a system of such an arrangement believed to have descended from the lips of the Lord Siva and the aphorisms relating to this are, known after Him, as *Śiva-sūtra* or as *Maheśvara-sūtra* ('*Maheśvara*' being another name of Śiva). These aphorisms first give a few clusters of vowels and then those for consonants. The tenth *Śiva-sūtra* enumerates the following consonants in one such cluster:

J,b,g,ḍ,d,ś.

Every student of Pāṇinian grammar has to master these aphorisms by repeated readings. But as the consonants when unaided by vowels cannot

be pronounced the concerned aphorism enumerates, for facilities of pronunciation, the mentioned consonants by adding the vowel '*a*' to each of the consonants except the last one and the aphorism reads:

Ja-ba-ga-ḍa-da-ś (*Śiva-sūtra* 10).

In grammatical literature this cluster is usually referred to by the abbreviation *jaś* which contains only the first and last components of the above aphorism. The fuller unabridged aphorism is treated as a word composed of these letters and Pāṇini and others permit well-formedness of the sentence containing such a word with appropriate non-verbal (*subanta*) suffixes.

AR-6 is one such well-formed sentence and Gaṅgeśa's commentators have come up with two more such sentences containing the word under reference. Thus:

AR-7
Ja-ba-ga-ḍa-da-śāḥ prameyāḥ (are objects of knowledge)

AR-8
Ja-ba-ga-ḍa-da-śāḥ ṣaḍ (are six in number).

Though AR-7 and AR-8 raise special problems of interpretation, these two and AR-6 contain the same compound word '*Ja-ba-ga-ḍa-da-ś*' which takes up appropriate *subanta* suffixes. By Gaṅgeśa's own admission it is thus a *prātipadika* having meaning. So far as AR-6 is concerned, it asserts that someone said '*Ja-ba-ga-ḍa-da-ś*'. Let us imagine that a teacher of Pāṇinian grammar recited to his pupils the concerned *Śivasūtra* and someone of them was perhaps unmindful and missed it. When he asked the pupil sitting beside him about it the latter stated that the teacher said (*āha*):

Ja-ba-ga-ḍa-da-ś(am) [*āha* (said)].

Assuming that we have been able to give an idea about the contexts in which the word under reference has been and may be used we can now explain the contention of the objector which challenges Gaṅgeśa's claim that when a word means itself it does so via transfer from normal meaning to a shift in meaning. Thus, in AR-6 (and also in AR-7 and AR-8) the

word under reference is a meaningless (*nirarthaka*) expression in the sense that the compound does not mean anything in the outer world. Hence, there is no scope of transfer of meaning, for that involves a trial with normal meaning which is lacking here. In reply to this objection Gaṅgeśa points out that the word should not be taken in its face value as a cluster of consonants succeeded by vowels because the intention of the concerned aphorism as well as of the teacher and his informed pupil is to refer to the consonants only. And we should not forget that the convention of adding the vowels has been observed to facilitate pronunciation of the intended cluster of the concerned consonants, and also for better memorising. Gaṅgeśa, as we could understand him, here holds that the consonants figuring in that pronounced cluster stand for themselves and the concerned letters can be said to constitute the primary meaning of the consonants. This being the case, the word, as actually uttered, i.e., each of the consonants followed by the concerned vowel, is constituted by the consonants also and when the word uttered means itself the route to this meaning is first the consonants and then a transfer to a combination containing them. Gaṅgeśa thus shows that his thesis that auto-reference involves transfer of meaning does not fail in AR-6 also. And if it does not fail in AR-6 it should not fail in AR-7 and AR-8 either, if we remember that the predication involved in AR-7 is a case of distributive predication inasmuch as each of the consonants is an object of knowledge and that involved in AR-8 is a case of collective predication inasmuch as the consonants taken together are six in number though taken singly they are not.

I shall present here an example which is similar to the one Gaṅgeśa has picked up from Pāṇinian grammar. The example is not very apt here; but given some presuppositions, it may be regarded as very close to Gaṅgeśa's example. Our example relates to figures and moods of syllogism in Aristotelian logic. We all know that the middle term occurs twice in a syllogism – once in the major premise and once in the minor premise. Given the stipulation that the former occurs earlier and the latter after that, and also that every premise has a subject-predicate structure, the figures which are determined by the positions of the middle term in the premises can be represented as follows: *sp, pp, ss, ps* (where *s* stands for *subject* and *p* for *predicate*). One may frame a sentence as an aid to memory. Let us suppose that the following is such a sentence:

Spencer happily missed tips.

The four words in the given sequence stands for the four pairs of consonants, *s* and *p* in all possible combinations in the order we have mentioned above. If a student can master this sentence he is not likely to go wrong about the figures. Imagine a logic teacher telling his students:

AR-9

Say with me
Spencer happily missed tips.

Presuppose here that the words do not, but the pair of consonants *sp, pp, ss, ps* directly represent the figures. Though unlike the word in Gaṅgeśa's example the words in the given sentence are known to have meanings in the outside world, these are of no relevance here. Perhaps the following example will be more apt, though the concerned letters are all vowels which have been put separately in different syllables of single words. We all know that AAA, EAE, AII, EIO are the only valid combinations so far as the first figure is concerned. For facilitating of the remembering them easily the Medieval logicians have placed the letters in different syllables. Thus there will be three syllables in each of the names of the valid moods. Imagine again a logic teacher telling his students:

AR-10

Say with me
Barbara, Celarent, Darii, Ferio.

Let us presuppose here also that these words do not directly represent the valid moods of the first figures but stand for the vowels in the given order. Given our presuppositions, the objector's point can be illustrated with reference to AR-9 and AR-10, and Gaṅgeśa's reply, too, can be made suitable.

III

We would like to consider a few more cases of auto-reference noted, and made use of, in the Pāṇinian tradition and then make an assessment of Gaṅgeśa's views in the light of those cases.[3] It is to be noted here that a root verb can act as a finite verb in a sentence when it takes up a suffix of a special variety (called *ākhyāta*). A root verb can

also find its place differently in the role of a verb but only after taking up other appropriate verbal suffixes (e.g. *tumun, kta, ktavatu* etc.). But it is never allowed that a root verb can take up non-verbal suffixes, (say, of the variety called *subanta-vibhakti* which a noun or its equivalent, i.e., a *prātipadika* alone can take up). Though this is the case in the normal sentences containing root verbs along with appropriate verbal suffixes, this restriction has to be given up if root verbs themselves are to be used in the role of nominatives, accusatives or in similar other capacities that are natural to nouns or noun equivalents. Such a use of root verbs becomes necessary for various purposes when one desires to speak about the verbs themselves, say, about their types or about their meaning or about their appropriateness for taking up suffixes of special kinds. There is, thus a provision in Pāṇinian grammar for mentioning the verb (*dhātunirdeśa*) in non-verbal roles by adding appropriate suffixes of a very special variety for deriving a name-expression from a root verb to refer to the verb itself, as is evident from the following rule:

Ikstipau dhātunirdeśe

[The suffix '*ik*' or the suffix '*tip*' may be added to a root verb to obtain a name-expression to refer to the verb itself (*dhātunirdeśe*).]

We give below a few such examples illustrating the application of the suffix '*ik*':

(1) The root verb '*gam*' ('to go') and the suffix '*ik*' yield '*gami*' and this is used in

AR-11

Gamerḍoḥ

['*Gamer*' = '*Gameḥ*' which is '*gami*' in the possessive case-ending]

(2) The root verb '*pac*' ('to cook') and suffix '*ik*' yield '*paci*' and this is used in

AR-12

. . . *tatsarvam pacerarthaḥ*

['*pacer*' = '*paceḥ*' which is '*paci*' in the possessive case-ending]

We thus find that AR-11 and AR-12 contain name-expressions coined

from root verbs and the suffix '*ik*' and the products do not mean what the root verbs mean. The derived forms stand for the root verbs themselves. If these forms are thus names for root verbs they must stand related through some form of meaning-relation. Since these newly coined names do not stand for what the verbs stand for, there is no scope for treating the meaning-relation involved as a case of transfer of meaning. By exclusion then, the root-verbs themselves constitute the primary meaning of the derived forms. Let us at this point take note of a few cases of auto-reference of a different sort.

Even before Pāṇini the elitist people of Vedic India found it necessary to refer to different hymns of the *Ṛgveda* which are called *sūktas* and also to different *Sāmavedic* hymns called *sāmans*. The practice they followed to refer to the different hymns was to pick up words of the respective hymns, preferably the first two words, and coin a new name for them after adding a suffix to their combinations. We have earlier come across such a coinage, viz., '*acchāvākīya*' in AR-3. A few other familiar words are

> '*nāsadiya*' (= '*na*' + '*asat*' + '*cha*'), '*Mitravaruṇīya*' (= '*Mitravaruṇa*' + '*cha*'), '*yajñāyajñīya*' (= '*yajña ayajña*' + '*cha*'), '*Kāyāśubhīya*' (= '*kāya*' + '*aśubha*' + '*cha*'), and '*Asyavāmīya*'.

We shall however concentrate only on the last word and note here some of the important points made by Pāṇini, Patañjali and their followers. People used to refer to the Vedic hymn (R.V.i, 164) which begins with the words *Asya vāmasya* as *asyavāmīya*. The word *asyavāmīya* is the product of '*asyavāma*' (which is taken to be a *prātipadika* or noun) and the suffix '*cha*'. The rule that regulates such a formation has been stated by Pāṇini as '*Matau chaḥ sūktasāmnoḥ*".[4]

The product understood in the light of this Pāṇinian *sūtra* means a *Ṛgvedic* hymn that contains (begins with) '*asya vāma* . . . ' (the second word here is the *prātipadika* which assumes the form '*vāmasya*' in the possessive case-ending). As the suffix '*cha*' is a non-verbal suffix, it can be added only to a noun or its equivalent and this implies that '*asyavāma*' is also a noun. But in order to be such a noun word capable of taking up such a suffix, it must be a single word. As '*asya-vāma*' consists of two words, they can be treated to constitute a single word only if they are capable of being compounded according to some rule regarding formation of compound words. Barring a few exceptions (and

the word under reference does not fall within that group), it is not permissible to retain the non-verbal suffix of the *subanta* order determining the case-endings in the body of the compound word. If we would have followed the rule rigidly the first word '*asya*' would have been shorn of the possessive case suffix and it would have been reduced to '*etad*' and the compound would have been '*etadvāma*'. But this would have defeated the purpose for which the compound has been formed, for the Vedic hymn under reference begins with '*asyavāma*' and not with '*etadvāma*'. The restrictive rule regarding formation of compounds has its validity only if the compound does not represent and refer to the constituents of the compound and when it does so the compound that is to be formed falls outside the scope of the rule. The explanation seems to be that when a word refers to itself the referring word is the imitation (*anukaraṇa*) of what is being referred to (*anukārya*) and thus if the compound is to be such an imitation of its constituents, they must preserve the mode of their original appearance.

In spite of the fact that this relation of phonetic similarity obtains between such an imitation and what is being imitated, the latter is no single word but a group of words as occurring in the hymn while the former behaves like a single word as it takes up a suffix appropriate to a nominal base. But more important than this phonetic affinity and this difference between them in respect of form and function is the fact that '*asyavāma*' in '*asyavāmīya*' is only an imitation and not a perfect reproduction of the imitated, for the latter is a part of Vedic song sung strictly according to the prescribed rules while its imitation is only a prosaic representation of the concerned sounds. Because of such basic difference Patañjali maintains that the imitation is distinct from the imitated in his comments on the *sūtra* under reference. Therefore, like '*gami*' which refers to '*gam*' and '*paci*' which refers to '*pac*', '*asyavāma*' as occurring in '*asyavāmīya*' is something distinct from that occurring in the hymn. Since it is distinct from what it refers to there is no difficulty in treating it as a name for the original sound – the relation obtaining between them being one of primary meaning. It should however be noted in this connection that the word '*asyavāmīya*' refers to the hymn beginning with the words '*asya vāma (sya)*' and not simply to these words themselves. But as the hymn consists of these words and a few more and as '*asyavāmīya*' refers to the whole sequence of these words, it can be said that it refers also to these two beginning words. Understood in this way the derived form '*asyavāmīya*' thus refers to the first two

beginning words of the Vedic hymn. According to this interpretation, this word looks similar to the verbal derivatives like '*gami*', '*paci*' etc. inasmuch as like them '*asyavāmīya*' also is distinct in appearance and spelling and pronunciation from what it refers to. But we should also note that such a clear distinction is missing in respect of the words involved in cases like '*Gām uccāraya*' and '*Gaur asti*'. Moreover, if letters are taken to refer to themselves, as Gaṅgeśa seems to endorse, we would not be able to postulate such a distinctness in this area of auto-reference. We thus find two opposite conclusions forced upon us – one regarding distinctness and the other regarding identity. What then is the way out? Should we stick consistently to a single solution or offer two hypotheses for two groups of cases?

Treating

(a) '*Gam uccāraya*' as '*Go iti uccāraya*'
(b) '*Gaur asti*' as '*Go iti asti*'

and also

(c) '*Gami*' as '*gam iti*'

or,

(d) '*Paci*' as '*pac iti*'

and similarly,

(e) '*asyavāmīya*' as '*asyavāma iti*'

we can achieve consistency in the view that when a word refers to itself, the referring word and the word being referred to are distinct from each other, though the word 'itself' in 'when a word refers to itself' is to be taken as implying that the referring word, in spite of being distinct, is an imitation of what is being referred to. Alternatively, however, both the referring word which is only an imitation and the word being referred to are to be taken as differently pronounced sounds, thereby dispensing with quotation marks and similar other devices like adding '*iti*'. But in each of the two alternatives the words are taken as distinct from one another. Philosophically a more interesting position is however

that according to which the concerned words may also be taken as identical. Some of the later philosophers even of the Grammarians' school (for example, Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa) maintain that the relation between the concerned words may be either one of identity or distinctness.[5]

What type of relationship, according to Gaṅgeśa, may be said to obtain between the concerned words in cases of auto-reference? By his explicit admission the letters mean themselves and therefore the relationship involved is one of identity. In other cases of auto-reference we have discussed from Gaṅgeśa it should also be the case that the involved terms are related by way of identity, for, according to him, a word means itself through a transfer of meaning and the route to this is first a trial with the standard or normal meaning and then travelling back to the word itself as its designator. For difficulties cited earlier and for absence of any clinching argument in favour of the Gaṅgeśite hypothesis one would perhaps favour the sort of explanation offered by some philosophers by postulating that the words, which are involved in cases of auto-reference and are related by way of imitation and being imitated, are really distinct from each other in respect of certain fundamental features. However, for the sake of argument we would not object to Gaṅgeśa's plan of treating them as identical. The position that they are identical does not, however, necessarily imply that a word means itself through transfer of meaning. It may, as was admitted by Gaṅgeśa himself in respect of letters, refer to itself as its standard or normal meaning, though in other instances of its use it may refer to something different from itself as its standard meaning. Thus, a word is necessarily characterised by ambiguity, because in some uses it means itself when we make (and we certainly can make) assertions about it while in others it stands for some object outside. If thus words are treated as homonyms, there is no scope for treating the words as meaning themselves through transfer of meaning, for they may be taken to constitute the primary meaning and this does not preclude the possibility that the objects also may constitute another primary meaning. We hereby avoid the roundabout way of determining the meaning of words in cases of auto-reference.

IV

Gaṅgeśa has made use of the hypothesis of transfer of meaning for solving the problem of meaning of the verbal inflections called *ākhyāta*, and also for solving the problem of meaning of tricky compound words.

We have shown elsewhere[6] that such a hypothesis is not indispensable for solving such problems. In respect of compound words we have suggested that they be treated as phrases whose meaning is to be regarded as the function of the standard meanings of components. So far as the verbal inflections under reference are concerned what is sought to be covered by transfer of meaning of deviant denomination may very well be taken as constitutive of standard meaning – the implication being that the concerned words are cases of homonyms. We have ended with a similar conclusion in respect of self-referring words. Since we have thus been able to raise doubts regarding the extension of the thesis of transfer of meaning, the hypothesis of transfer of meaning should be assessed by reference to the staple cases which are mostly cases of metaphors and other allied types of figures of speech. In the West also philosophers have utilised the theory of transfer of meaning for solving the problem of metaphor. But recently attempts have been made by Donald Davidson and his followers to distinguish between metaphorical truth and truth of the metaphorical sentence. It has thus been argued that the inventor of a metaphor may hint at some metaphorical truth and the interpreter of the metaphor may be successful in arriving at it through some other route than his interpretation of the sentence ensuing upon his listening to the metaphorical sentence. The supporters of this view are of the opinion that the inventor of the metaphor does not take his metaphorical sentence to be true. Nor does he intend it to be taken as true and likewise the interpreter also does not take it to be true. If what is thus argued is justifiable, there is no scope to push forward the thesis of transfer of meaning for an understanding of the meaning of the metaphorical sentence, since there would then be no necessity of suspension or *epoché*, or, in our jargon, of *tātparyānupapatti* which is taken to be a condition for postulating transfer of meaning.

One of the major points Davidson wants to make is that the words in a metaphorical sentence are understood by the hearer in their standard meaning and the sentence is interpreted in its literal meaning as one that is false. Thus, the sentence,[7] 'Tolstoy is an infant' is interpreted as false by treating the word 'infant' in its standard meaning and also by recounting that Tolstoy is a great literary figure in Russian literature. If Gaṅgeśa were alive today and knew English and also about Tolstoy he also would have conceded this point as an interpreter of this sentence for this step is necessary in his theory also. Where he differs from Davidson is that this very sentence is also taken to generate a

cognition in the hearer about a true proposition involving Tolstoy and infants. This he can entertain only if he takes the speaker to be truthfully asserting the sentence. But though Gautama emphasises the role of truthful speaker (*āpta*) Gaṅgeśa does not. He mentions cases of true sentences spoken by a habitual liar for deceiving others. It is imagined that if the liar himself is mistaken and thus if the proposition he believes to be true is false what he says for deceiving others must then be true. He also envisages that a talking bird may accidentally utter a true sentence which may seem to be relevant in a given context to some hearer. If in such a context a hearer, not knowing that he is listening to a sentence by a talking bird or by a habitual liar, comes to form a belief regarding the fact the sentence in question is about, will he be credited with knowledge about the fact? Undeterred by the oddity of the situation, which no epistemologist in the post-Gettier era would treat to be anything more than a lucky guess, Gaṅgeśa concedes that the hearer has knowledge here. His argument is that if other conditions are there the truth of the sentence heard is enough and the truthfulness of the speaker is not necessary. In this he differs from Gautama. Generalising from this we can expect Gaṅgeśa to hold that, if reference to the truthfulness of the speaker is dropped, the metaphorical sentence cannot generate any understanding of truth since the sentence itself is false. If Gaṅgeśa has to be consistent he should embrace this conclusion. But if someone arrives at any truth in such a context the route to this truth is not through the meaning of words but is perhaps some process of inference or some process of association of ideas. In his interpretation of one of the verses of the great Sanskrit poet, Daṇḍin (*Gaccha gacchasi cet kānto etc.*), Gaṅgeśa himself admits the unavoidability of the inferential process in the husband's arriving at the meaning of the lady's speech reported in the verse in question.[8] Taking hints from all these we can, consistently with what Gaṅgeśa has said, offer an interpretation of metaphors in Davidsonian way. If this is permitted, we do not see any need for the hypothesis of transfer of meaning even for metaphors. (Those who have been conditioned to looking at Nyāya from the historical point of view may, however, find my conclusions unacceptable.)

It is imaginable that we are wrong in our theory about metaphors. But even if we are wrong here, it would not imply that our conclusions in respect of self-referring words are all untenable. Accepting Gaṅgeśa's point that a self-referring expression and what it stands for are identical and are related to one another by way of designation and its

designatum, we have proposed that if such an expression also stands for an object other than itself, it may be regarded as a homonym. This alternative has the merit of economy in respect of the total number of linguistic entities to be admitted. It is not thus subject to the charge of infinite names starting from a given single word. But the suggestion that the meaning of an expression necessarily includes itself implies the existence of meaning which it is not necessary for anyone to learn. Frankly speaking, this is an awkward situation. If thus we give up the general position that a self-referring expression and what it stands for are identical, we can take them as distinct but as related to one another by way of imitation and the imitated. Insistence on such a relationship will preclude the arbitrary stipulations such as 'let Jeremiah = 'California'' or 'let Mary = 'Marilyn''.[9] And because of this restriction involving imitation there is no possibility, in this alternative also, of generating infinite names from a given single word. If we accept the empirical fact that names of names can be coined with the help of established rules, for example, with the help of some device, e.g., the suffixes '*ik*', '*tip*' or '*cha*' as used in Pāṇinian grammar, we do not expose ourselves to any theoretical possibility of generating infinite names. And even if we concede that language may mechanically permit second tier words by adding 'iti' to spoken and written words or quotation marks to written words, we need not be worried about any regress. For, these rules are basically rules for justifying existing coinages and not for unnecessarily multiplying words that are not in use. But here also there would be no necessity of learning the meanings of specific higher order words. Knowledge of the concerned rules is sufficient and in this there is a similarity between such words and those first order words that are formed by adding suffixes to base words.[10]

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NOTES

[1] We have considered four examples (AR 1–4) from Gaṅgeśa. These are to be found in a few pages beginning from p. 683 of Vol. II of *Tattvacintāmaṇi-Śabdakhaṇḍa* of the Asiatic Society Edition, Calcutta (1897) and also in pages beginning with p. 233 of *Śabdacintāmaṇi* (eds. Sukharanjan Saha and Pradyot Kumar Mukhopadhyay) published by Jadavpur University, Calcutta (1990). AR 8 and 9 are from *Āloka* and *Prākaśa* (pp. 685–6 of the Asiatic Society Volume.

[2] For an idea of staple cases of transfer of meaning see chapter 5 of my book *Meaning, Truth and Predication: A Reconstruction of Nyāya Semantics* (Jadavpur University, 1990).
[3] I am indebted to Hemanta Kumar Ganguli, Nandita Banerjee and Prabal Kumar Sen for helping me with appropriate Pāṇinian examples.
[4] Pāṇini's aphorism 5/2/59.
[5] Verses 2 and 3 of *Nāmārthanirṇaya* of Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa's *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra*.
[6] See the last section ('A short review') of chapter 6 of my book referred to in note 2.
[7] The example has been taken from Davidson's paper 'What metaphors mean'.
[8] *Tattvacintāmaṇi, Śabdakhaṇḍa* (Asiatic Society Edition) p. 546.
[9] Pattrick Suppes has made such stipulations in his *Introduction to Logic* (pp. 121–22).
[10] I am indebted to B. K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti for inviting me to contribute a paper for the present volume. I sent them a longer paper in 1988 which was subsequently included in my book referred to in note 2. The paper in its present form is a revised version of the last section of my earlier paper.

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